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*TURGOT*

Great French Writers

Edited by J. J. Jusserand

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belonging to M. le Marquis Turgot

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# TURGOT

*Great French Writers*

# TURGOT

BY

LÉON SAY

*Member of the French Academy*

Translated by

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# GREAT FRENCH WRITERS.

## STUDIES BY THE PRINCIPAL FRENCH AUTHORS OF THE DAY ON THE LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE OF THE PRINCIPAL FRENCH AUTHORS OF THE PAST.

OUR nineteenth century, now drawing to a close, has shown from the first, and will bequeath to the next age, a vivid taste for historical research, to which it has brought an ardour, a method, crowned by a success unprecedented in former times. The story of the World and its inhabitants has been entirely re-written. The pickaxe of the archæologist has restored to light the bones of the heroes of Mycenæ and the very features of Sesostris. Ruins explained, hieroglyphs translated, have led to reconstituting the life of the illustrious dead, sometimes to penetrating into their thought.

With a still more intense passion, because it was blended with affection, our century has applied itself to reviving the great writers of all literatures, those depositaries of national genius and interpreters of national thought. France has not lacked scholars to undertake this task; they have published the works, and cleared up the biography of those illustrious men we cherish as our ancestors, and who contributed, even more efficiently than princes and captains, to the formation of modern France, not to say of the modern world.

For it is one of our glories that the sway of France has prevailed less by the power of arms than by the power of thought; and the action of our country upon the world has ever been independent of her military triumphs; indeed, she has been seen to predominate in the most distressing hours of her national history. Hence the great thinkers of our literature have an interest not only for their direct descendants, but also for a large European posterity scattered beyond our frontiers.

Initiators first, then popularisers, the French were the foremost, in the turmoil prevalent at the opening of the Middle Ages, to begin a new literature: the first songs heard by modern society in its cradle were French songs. Like Gothic art and the institution of universities, mediæval literature commences in our country, thence expands throughout Europe. Here was the beginning.

But this literature was ignorant of the value of form, moderation, and reserve; it was too spontaneous, not sufficiently reflective, too heedless of questions of Art. The France of Louis the Fourteenth gave due honour to form, and was in the meanwhile the age of the revival of philosophy, of which Voltaire and Rousseau were to be the European apostles in the eighteenth century, awaiting the eclectic and scientific era in which we live; it was the period of the diffusion of literary doctrines. Had not this task been carried out as it was, the destiny of literatures would have been changed; Ariosto, Tasso, Camoens, Shakespeare, or Spenser, all the foreign writers together, those of the Renaissance and those subsequent, would not have sufficed to bring about this reform; and our age would perhaps never have known those impassioned poets, who have been at the same time perfect artists, freer than their precursors of old, purer in form than Boileau had ever dreamed: the Chéniers, Keats, Goethes, Lamartines, Léopardis.

Many works, the publication of which is amply justified by all these reasons, have therefore been devoted in our days to the great French writers. And yet, do these mighty and charming geniuses occupy in the present literature of the world the place which is due to them? In no wise, not even in France; and for sundry reasons.

In the first place, after having tardily received in the last century the revelation of Northern literature, feeling ashamed of our ignorance, we became impassioned for

foreign works, not without profit, but perhaps to excess, to the great prejudice at all events of our national ancestors. These ancestors, moreover, it has not been possible as yet to associate with our lives as we should have wished, and to mingle them in the current of our daily ideas; and this, precisely on account of the nature of the works that have been devoted to them, it has been no easy thing to do. For where do these dead revive. In their works, or in treatises on literature. That is a great deal, no doubt; and the beautiful and scholarly editions and the well-ordered treatises have rendered in our days this communion of souls less difficult. But that is not yet sufficient; we are accustomed nowadays to have everything made easy for us: grammars and sciences, like travelling, have been simplified; yesterday's impossibilities have become to-day's matters of course. This is why the old treatises on literature often repel us and complete editions do not attract. They are suitable for those studious hours, too few in the lives of busy men, but not for the leisure moments, which are more frequent. Thus the book to which all turn, and which opens of itself, is the latest novel; while the works of great men, complete and faultless, motionless like family portraits, venerated, but seldom contemplated, stand in their fine array on the high shelves of our libraries.

They are loved, yet neglected. Those great men seem too distant, too different, too learned, too inaccessible. The idea of an edition in many volumes, of the notes which divert our attention, of the scientific display which surrounds them, perhaps the vague recollection of school and classic studies, the juvenile task, oppress the mind; the idle hour we had to dispose of has already flown away, and thus we acquire the habit of laying aside our old authors, like silent kings, careless of familiar converse with them.

The object of the present collection is to recall to our firesides those great men, whose temples are too rarely visited, and to revive between descendants and forefathers that union of ideas and purposes which alone can secure, notwithstanding the changes wrought by time, the unalloyed preservation of our national genius. In the volumes that are being published will be found precise information on the life, works, and influence of each of the writers conspicuous in universal literature, or representing an original side of French intellect. These books will be short, their price moderate; they will thus be accessible to everyone. They will be uniform in size, paper, print, with the specimen now before the reader. They will supply on doubtful points the latest results of literary research, and thereby may be useful even to the well read; they will contain no notes, as the name of the authors for each work will be a sufficient guarantee, the co-operation of the most able contemporary writers having been secured for the series. Finally, an accurate reproduction of an authentic portrait will enable readers to make in some degree the acquaintance by sight of our great writers.

In short, to recall the part they played, now better known, thanks to erudite researches; to strengthen their action on the present time; to tighten the bonds and revive the affection uniting us to the past ages of our literature; by contemplating the past, to inspire confidence in the future, and silence, if it be possible, the doleful voices of the disheartened,—such are our chief objects. We also believe that this series will have several other advantages. It is right that every generation should reckon up the riches bequeathed to it by its ancestors, learning thus to make a better use of them. Finally, there is no better test of the quality, power, and limitations of an age, than the verdict which it passes on the productions of the past. It judges itself while giving judgment on others. It is hoped that this series may be at once useful in facilitating the comprehension of former periods, and helpful to a knowledge of the present, if the scheme, favourably received by the public, should be carried on to final completeness.

J. J. JUSSERAND.

# TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

M. LÉON SAY'S work may almost be considered as an *ouvrage de circonstance*, to use the French expression. Never perhaps has the controversy raged more vehemently than at the present time, between free trade, fair trade, and protection; never has it been more necessary to study the earnest attempts made to break down the restrictive laws which, under the influence of mediæval traditions, hampered the development of commerce and industry in all their branches.

Turgot was a man of the school of Montesquieu. "His wise and benevolent administration," says Sir James Mackintosh, "though long enough for his glory, was too short, and, perhaps, too *early*, for those salutary and grand reforms which his genius had conceived, and his virtue would have effected." At any rate, he has left behind him a reputation both as a politician and as a writer which time helps only to confirm, and the person best qualified to give us the history of his eventful life was certainly the author of the present volume, who, a distinguished political economist, has inherited from two generations of great men the doctrines he maintains with so much ability and perseverance.

# TURGOT'S WORKS.

ONLY a few of Turgot's works appeared during his lifetime; amongst them are his *Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses* (1766, 12mo), and his poem in metrical verses, a few copies only of which were printed, and given away by him to his friends.

*Didon, poème en vers métriques hexamètres, divisé en* III *chants, traduits du* IV^e^ *livre de l'Enéide de Virgile, avec le commencement de l'Enéide, et les* II^e^, VIII^e^ *et* X^e^ *églogues du même* (par Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot), 1778, 108 pp., 4to (reprinted in the edition of the works published by Dupont de Nemours).

Turgot's works have been collected after his death.

*Œuvres de M. Turgot, ministre d'état, précédées et accompagnées de mémoires et de notes sur sa vie, son administration et ses ouvrages* (with the motto: "Bonum virum facile crederes, magnum libenter."—*Tacitus*). Paris: Belin, 1809-11, 9 vols., 8vo.

*Œuvres de Turgot, nouvelle édition classée par ordre de matières, avec les notes de M. Dupont de Nemours, augmentée de lettres inédites, des questions sur le commerce et d'observations et de notes nouvelles par MM. Eugène Daire et Hippolyte Dussard, et précédé d'une notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Turgot, par M. Eugène Daire.* Paris: Guillaumin, 1844, 2 vols., large 8vo.

Parts of Turgot's correspondence are to be found in various publications, such as the following:

*Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et de Turgot*, 1770-79; Henry's edition. Paris: Charavay, 1882, 8vo.

*Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, by J. Hill Burton. Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1846, 2 vols., 8vo.

*Letters of Eminent Persons addressed to David Hume*, published by J. Hill Burton. Edinburgh and London, 1849, 8vo.

*Dupont de Nemours et l'Ecole physiocratique*, by G. Schelle. Paris: Guillaumin et Cie, 1888, 8vo.

There are, besides, unpublished letters of Turgot in the archives of several families, chiefly in those of the Turgot family (at the château of Lantheuil) and of the descendants of Dupont de Nemours, now residing in the United States.

# TURGOT.

## INTRODUCTION.

A GREAT deal has been written on Turgot; we have the history of his childhood, of his youth, and of his mature years; he has been described to us hiding, whilst yet a child, under the arm-chairs, in order to avoid, out of sheer timidity, the visits which his mother received; we have been told how, later on in his youth, he was wont to play at games of battledore and shuttlecock, dressed in his clerical cassock, with the handsome young girl known then as Minette, and who was afterwards to become Madame Helvétius. We still possess the speeches he delivered as Prior of the House of Sorbonne at the opening and at the closing of the *Sorboniques* of 1750. We know what reasons determined him to give up the Church, and how he filled offices in the magistracy, first as deputy-councillor to the solicitor- (*procureur*) general, then as councillor to the parliament, then as *maître des requêtes*. We have been asked to witness his first quarrel with the parliament, in 1754, on the day when he consented to become a member of a Royal Chamber, ordered to deliver justice in the place of the exiled parliament.

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We have heard the *mots* of his friends, joyful at his appointment to the Intendance of Limoges, in 1761; and we have been reminded of the hopes which this appointment suggested to Voltaire: "One of our fellow-members has just written to me to say that an *intendant* is only fit to do mischief; you will, I trust, prove that he can do a great deal of good."

He remained thirteen years at Limoges, and during the quarter of a century which elapsed between his admission at the Sorbonne and his departure from Limoges, he was the idol of the *Encyclopédistes* and the economists. He knew, in succession, Quesnay, Gournay, Dupont de Nemours, Voltaire, Hume, Adam Smith, Condorcet. His correspondence is very extensive. He was the real chief of a school; and although the Duc de Choiseul, alluding to him in 1769, said that "he had not a ministerial head," his master, his friends, his disciples already looked upon him as the only minister capable of restoring order to the administration and to the finances of the tottering monarchy.

The letters, plans, memoirs, opinions, decrees, circulars, statements—all that he wrote during the first part of his life, all has been preserved. We can follow him, almost day by day, for the whole time during which he was in office from 1750 to 1774.

At last, when forty-seven years of age, he became a cabinet-minister, prepared by a whole life of thought, study, and practice as an administrator. He was then ready to realise the widest and most fruitful reforms.

He re-established freedom in the corn trade, and conjured up popular anger by this measure, nevertheless so justified. He succeeded, to the astonishment of many people, in putting an end to the *guerre des farines*, and crowned his work by proclaiming the freedom of labour. The suppression of the *jurandes* and *maîtrises* was the great act of his life, and, as it were, his economic will and testament.

His memoirs addressed to the king have been preserved, also his notes, the decrees of the council which he drew up, the preambles which he wrote at the head of his edicts during the course of his ministry. We know all that he thought, wrote, and did during an administration of twenty months—very short, as we see, but the most admirable, the busiest that can be imagined. He fell at last, after a vigorous struggle, defeated by the coalition of interests and prejudices—the coalition, says Voltaire, of financiers, courtiers (*talons rouges*), and magistrates (*bonnets carrés*); then those who spoke of him discussed endlessly the causes of his failure.

Turgot's downfall has been ascribed to the threefold fact that he undertook too many things at once; that he was too unbending, and that he was animated by a sectarian spirit. Critics have endeavoured to find out what are the qualities of a statesman which he needed to get on.

His biographers follow him in his retreat, in order to understand him better; there they find him busy with scientific experiments, resuming the works on prosody which interested him in his early youth.

He dies at last, at the age of fifty-four, from an attack of gout—a malady which for more than twenty years had never ceased troubling him, and which made him answer to Malesherbes, who blamed him for being too much in a hurry: "I cannot help it! The needs of the people are immense; and in my family gout carries us off at fifty."

For all those who have related to us his life, who have collected with a pious care his most trifling sayings, his slightest writings, Turgot is a great mind, one of the greatest minds of the eighteenth century, the greatest, perhaps, next to Montesquieu; but they all look upon him as an unlucky reformer, who died at his work under the attacks of adversaries, weaker than himself, it is true, but more cunning; men who were no doubt less anxious to know and to apply the great truths of political economy, but who were admirably trained to set in motion, for their own profit, all the springs of court intrigues.

We cannot conceal the fact that an utterance escapes from the bosom of those even who have most constantly lived near him, who have never ceased loving and admiring him. They all say, repeat, and write: Turgot did not possess the qualities which insure victory.

My aim is to deduce from his life and his work a very different conclusion; and whilst speaking of him, I would treat him, not as a defeated man, but as a glorious.

The fact is, that if he failed one hundred years ago, he has in reality lorded it over the present day. He has founded the political economy of the nineteenth century,

and, thanks to the freedom of labour which he has bequeathed to us, he has stamped upon the nineteenth century the mark which will be its chief characteristic in history.

Thanks to the freedom of work, the nineteenth century has been the age of industry on a large scale, the age of the application to the development of work and of riches of the great scientific, geographical, and economic discoveries. By causing the principles of the freedom of work to penetrate deeply into the conscience of France and of Europe, Turgot has opened the way to the conquest of the world by the civilisation of the West, and it is the nineteenth century which has accomplished that conquest.

A very remarkable indication of Turgot's individual action in the movement which has taken place during our own times is this: his inspiration seems still necessary at the present time to keep alive the principles of which he recommended the application. In order to prevent the present century from abandoning the track marked for it by Turgot, we are compelled to cling more than ever to his person, to his life, and to his actions; supported by him, we are obliged to engage once more in struggles very similar to those in which he was engaged nearly one hundred and twenty years ago.

Freedom of work, which was for him the Alpha and Omega of all economic laws, is to-day the object of the most spirited attacks.

It is no longer the privileged members of society, the

rich, the parliamentarians, the directing classes, as they were commonly designated, who, like in ancient times, are coalesced against Turgot.

The present reaction appears among the workmen, the sons of those who were, so to say, mad with joy when he proclaimed the decree abolishing the *maîtrises* and the *jurandes*. The workmen are doing their best to clutch their broken fetters, in order to fasten them again upon themselves, thinking that they will find a protection in what was in days gone by (but they have forgotten it) the instrument of their oppression.

The nineteenth century is Turgot's own, because it is the one during which his ideas have been applied, and where he has manifestly reigned over ideas and things. Will it have been the only century during which Turgot's ideas have received so brilliant a satisfaction? Will the next century burn what we have worshipped? Dismal prophets are not wanting to threaten us with that destiny. Those prophets of evil shall be belied by the events. Turgot has entered into his glory; he has entered into it for ever, and French political economy, of which he has been the true founder, does not yet feel disarmed. It is not on the point of striking its colours.

# CHAPTER I.

## TURGOT'S FAMILY.—HIS CHILDHOOD.—HIS EDUCATION.—THE SORBONNE.

TURGOT'S family was one of the oldest in Normandy, and Condorcet tells us that, in the language of the Northern conquerors, his name means the *god Thor.*

During the sixteenth century it had become divided into two branches—the Turgot des Tourailles, and the Turgot de Saint-Clair. Their common ancestor, Louis Turgot, was *maître des requêtes* to François, Duke d'Alençon, and councillor at the *présidial* (supreme court) of Caen. The eldest of his sons, Jean, was the first Turgot des Tourailles; and the second, Antoine, was the first Turgot de Saint-Clair.

One Turgot des Tourailles had to deal, as a soldier, in 1621, with a certain Montchrétien, and this circumstance, singularly enough, brought into connection for the first time the name of Turgot with that of the science upon which he has shed so much lustre.

Montchrétien, son of a Falaise apothecary, a tragic author, and a soldier of fortune, had been commissioned, at the time of the rising at La Rochelle, by the Protestant leaders, to summon together the Huguenots of

Normandy. In a letter to Peiresc, dated Caen, October 14th, 1621, Malherbe thus describes the end of his expedition:

"The event," says he, "which checkmated the Normandy rebels, has been the death of a man named Montchrétien, who was the manager of all that business. About a week ago he came, at eight o'clock in the evening, accompanied by other fellows of the same quality, to an inn in a place called les Tourailles, twelve leagues off from here. Information was immediately given to the lord of the manor, of which the inn forms a part. He forthwith came with fifteen or twenty musketeers."

The band of rebels was dispersed, and the lord of Tourailles who drove them away and killed their chief bore the name of Claude Turgot.

Now, that Montchrétien, killed by a Turgot, had, besides his tragedies, written on industry and trade a work of remarkable sagacity; and that work bears the title, absolutely unknown then, of *Traité d'économie politique.*

It is the first time (1615) that a similar expression is used in our language to designate the science of political economy, and the man who employed it before anyone else perished miserably by the hands of one who had the very name of the precursor of J. B. Say in France and Adam Smith in England—the man, in short, who shed so strong and so lasting a light on political economy, of which he is one of the founders.

The grandfather was Turgot the minister, descended from Antoine Turgot de Saint-Clair, but belonged to a younger branch. He had been *intendant* in the *généralité* of Metz and in that of Tours. His father, Michel Étienne, was successively *maître des requêtes*, *prévôt des marchands* (mayor) of Paris, member of the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, councillor of state, and president of the *grand conseil.* Amongst his ancestors on his mother's side he counted Pierre Pithou, the celebrated jurist, of whom he was especially proud. He acquired a legitimate celebrity as *prévôt des marchands.* He undertook to improve the sanitary condition of the Paris swamps which extended between the Boulevards and Montmartre, and ordered a large drain to be constructed, which bears his name. This drain still exists—partly, at least—under the Rue Saint-Lazare. We owe to Michel Étienne Turgot one of the finest known plans (*plans cavaliers;* see Notes), and it bears his name; the fountain in the Rue de Grenelle was built, at his suggestion, by Bouchardon, whom he had trusted with the erection of it.

After having vacated his office, the *prévôt des marchands* was able to devote to the administration of his property part of the leisure left to him by his duties as councillor of state. His family estates were situated between Caen, Falaise, Bayeux and the sea, in that part of Normandy represented now by the department of Calvados.

These estates were raised to a marquisate in his honour, under the title of Marquisate of Soumont; after

the decease of the great minister, and with the view of bestowing further honour on his memory, the Turgots, Marquis de Soumont, were authorised to adopt the title of Marquis Turgot.

The *prévôt des marchands* did not reside at Soumont, but at Les Bons, Les Bons-Turgot, as Dupont de Nemours used to say, a small district not far distant from Soumont. Amongst the other plots of land, farms, and meadows which he possessed were those of Laulne and Brucourt, of which *our* Turgot bore the name. At the Sorbonne he used to be styled the Abbé de Laulne; when he left it he took the name of Turgot de Brucourt.

The *château* of Lantheuil, situated not far from Les Bons, and which is, so to say, the cradle of the family, was then in possession of the elder branch, the Turgots de Saint-Clair. It belonged later on to the Marquis Turgot. The present Marquis Turgot has gathered together at Lantheuil all his family papers. He has been kind enough to show them to me, and he has allowed me to consult them. I have had in my hands the first draft written by the great Turgot *currente calamo*, and bearing some erasures, of the letter which he addressed to the king, August 26, 1774, for the purpose of placing under his eyes, as he says, the engagement which he had made with himself to support him in his plans of economy. I thought I could hear the firm but feeling voice of the great man, that voice so sweet when he was conversing with his friends, so stern when he was speaking to his adversaries. I have found in the same family records

numerous traces of the examination made by Malesherbes of Turgot's papers, after his death, for the purpose of selecting the notes, documents, and MSS. which were about to be given up to Dupont de Nemours. They were to be published by that gentleman's care, and to form the first edition of Turgot's works.

The *prévôt des marchands* died February 1st, 1751, leaving three sons and one daughter. The eldest son entered the magistracy, and was *président à mortier* in the Paris parliament at the time of his death. The second, known as *le Chevalier Turgot*, was a *savant*, an administrator, and a soldier; he was for a time governor of Guyana. The third, lastly, is the minister. The daughter had married the Duke de Saint-Aignan.

The third son, the reforming minister, was born in Paris, May 10th, 1727. He was studious, timid, and awkward. The bashfulness which characterised his youth never completely forsook him. "My words are somewhat confused," he said one day to Louis XVI, "but the fact is that I feel troubled." "I know that you are timid," answered the king.

He was educated at the Collège Louis-le-Grand; then at the theological school of Saint-Sulpice. As early as 1743, when sixteen years old, he attended the lectures of the theological *faculté*. In 1746 he was obliged to obtain a special permission, on account of his age, in order to be admitted to the examination.

That permission had been granted to him by the theological *faculté*, "owing"—such were the words—"to the

king's very powerful recommendation, but also in acknowledgment of the most important services rendered during the course of his administration by M. Turgot's very illustrious father to the city of Paris and to the various orders of the *faculté* itself."

This special permission bears date October 1st, 1746. Six months later, on the 11th of March, 1747, the *prévôt des marchands* wrote to his second son, the chevalier, then at Malta, that his brother the *abbé* had maintained his B.A. thesis examination with brilliant success.

"Your brother the *abbé*," said he, "has maintained his thesis with every possible distinction; he has gone infinitely beyond my expectations, for he did not show the slightest timidity, and received the applause of all persons present. The examination took place in the outer schools of the Sorbonne, the hall of which is immense. It was perfectly furnished and lighted up; and, extensive as it is, it never ceased to be full of company during the five hours of the examination.

"My Lord the Archbishop of Tours presided. The assembly of the clergy, which is just now held in Paris, and over which he also presides, came likewise, as a body, to hear the thesis. My Lord the Archbishop of Paris, on his part, came *in fiocchi*. His cross-bearer, dressed in a surplice, carried the cross, sitting near the carriage-door; he walked before him in the hall, and occupied a stool opposite him, holding that large and beautiful archiepiscopal cross, which is of silver gilt.

When the archbishop had left the room the Papal nuncio came and remained there more than one hour and a half. As he went out, he said to the *abbé*, to the doctors of Sorbonne who accompanied him, likewise to your brother and to M. de Creil, that he had often been present at theological disputations, but that he had never yet heard a thesis maintained like this one.

"The Archbishop of Tours, on stepping down from his pulpit, embraced the *abbé*, saying to him that he called that maintaining a thesis in a splendid style. He went the next day to Versailles, and the king having asked him whether he was at the assembly of the clergy the day before, he answered in the negative. The king wanted to know why. He said that he was presiding over a thesis. 'Whose was it?' 'The Abbé Turgot.' The king thereupon asked whether the discussion was a good one; and the archbishop was kind enough to tell his majesty that he had never seen a discussion carried on with so much superiority. He added, moreover, that there was not a greater and more deserving subject than the *abbé*. All this is most flattering for us, and ought to give you, too, much pleasure."

Two years later, April 7th, 1749, he composed the first of his works on political economy. It is a letter written from the theological school to his fellow-pupil, the Abbé de Cicé, containing a refutation of the defence of Law's system, published twenty years before by the Abbé Terrasson.

Turgot did not regard metallic currency as a sign. "It

is," says he, "as an article of merchandise that money is, not the sign, but the common measure of other merchandise."

Whilst refuting the idea, so widely spread, that metallic currency is only a sign founded upon the royal stamp, Turgot did justice to those Utopists who then believed, as they did during the Revolution, and as many still believe at the present day, that the State can meet public expenditure by issuing bills which are not payable in cash, but are transformed by virtue of a law into compulsory money.

"The king," says he, "will enjoy merely a transitory advantage in the creation of bills, or rather in their multiplication; but that advantage will soon vanish away, because commodities will rise in price proportionately to the number of bills."

Dupont de Nemours, publishing that letter, remarks: "If, forty years later, the majority of the citizens who formed the Constituent Assembly had possessed as much intelligence as he (Turgot) had already at so early an age, France might have been saved from the *assignats*."

At the beginning of the year 1749 the young Abbé de Laulne was admitted as Master of Arts (*courir sa licence*), that is to say, he was allowed to take his last degrees.

The house of Sorbonne was a society the members of which followed the studies and exercises of the theological *facultés*. These members formed an association composed of about one hundred clergymen, chiefly

bishops, vicars-general, canons, *curés* of Paris and of the principal cities of the realm. The house was a large one; it still exists; it is the Sorbonne; it contained thirty-six sets of rooms, together with a church, a fine library, a garden, and servants belonging to the community. The meals were taken together. As many of the ecclesiastics lived at their own houses or in province, a certain number of apartments were reserved for the accommodation of ten or twelve students. It is one of these ten or twelve places which had been given to the son of the *prévôt des marchands.*

The M.A. degree (*licence*) for which he was preparing consisted of a certain number of theses:—first, the *tentative*, which qualified you to be a Bachelor: Turgot had already maintained it. Then there were the *mineure*, the *Sorbonique*, and the *majeure.*

Six months after his admission at the Sorbonne, that is to say, on December 31, 1749, he had been elected prior.

This was a kind of homage paid to distinguished young men, and to the sons of illustrious parents. Together with the title of prior, they enjoyed the right of presiding over the assemblies; and they were obliged (this was regarded as an honour likewise) to deliver Latin speeches on subjects chiefly connected with religion.

Turgot presided first as prior over the assembly held May 16, 1750, when the Abbé Morellet was admitted on trial—Morellet, who was about to become his friend, and

who was during his whole life his enthusiastic admirer. He then presided over the assembly of the 13th of August in the same year, when the same Morellet was definitely received a Fellow of the society.

From 1743 to 1750 Turgot had never ceased to prosecute theological studies, and these studies, together with the exercises which were their necessary complement, had given to his mind a most wonderful maturity.

"To go with some distinction," says Morellet, "through the theological exercises, required some amount of talent, some skill in clearing the objection and answering it. Turgot often said to me, laughing, 'My dear Abbé, we who have gone through the *licence* are the only men qualified to reason accurately.'"

We still possess the two speeches made by Turgot at the opening of the *Sorboniques* for the year 1750; the subject of the former is the blessings which the establishment of Christianity has procured to mankind. It is a remarkable piece of composition, but still resembles a rhetorician's exercise; one of those excellent Latin speeches which, a few years ago, used to be crowned in the same Sorbonne at the general competition between the Paris *lycées*. Writing to his brother, the chevalier (July 30, 1750) he says: "I have had to write a Latin speech, which I delivered on the 3rd of July, and of which the success was most flattering for me. I have now about four *speechlets* every week, with twelve arguments, waiting till I deliver a second one on the 27th of November. I am occupied with it now"

Writing to the same chevalier, on the 23rd of October 1750, his father said to him: "I told you some time ago the prodigious success of the discourse made by the *abbé* last July; he is to deliver another one on the 27th of next month." The *abbé's* success was still greater on the 27th of November than it had been on the previous 3rd of July.

His second speech, besides, is much more important than the former one; it treats of the successive progress of the human mind. It is a sketch of universal history, written with much talent, full of thoughts, wonderfully mature for a young man, characterised by very liberal ideas, and showing in every line an extremely keen sense of human perfectibility. *A propos* of the colonies of the ancients, we read in Turgot's essay the following sentence, which has often been quoted, and which preceded, by twenty-five years, the Declaration of Independence of the United States:

"Colonies are like fruits, which remain connected with the tree only till they are ripe. As soon as they became sufficient to themselves, they did what Carthage did, what America will do one day."

He was, at that time, very busy with translations from the Latin, and he believed that the better to imitate the ancients one might employ in the French language some of the rules of Greek or Latin versification. He would have wished to see in French poetry the alternate use of long and of short syllables, in order to produce on delicate and well trained-ears an effect analogous to

that of the melody as the ancients understood it. The investigation of this new prosody was one of Turgot's most constant recreations; he returned to it whenever his occupation allowed him to do so, and he translated the whole of the fourth book of the Æneid in metrical French hexameters.

When writing his poetry he assumed the fictitious name of the Abbé de Laage; and it is under this pseudonym that he sent it to Voltaire, asking for his opinion. We may believe that Voltaire was in no hurry to read the attempt of an unknown *abbé*. However, urged by fresh applications, he ended by making the following answer:—"An old man, bowed down by illness, and who has become nearly entirely blind, has received the letter of the 28th April, dated from Paris, but he has not received that dated from Genoa. He is penetrated with esteem for M. l'Abbé de Laage, and thanks him for his remembrance; but the sad state in which he is hardly allows him to enter into literary discussions. All he can say is, that he is extremely satisfied with what he has read, and that it is the only prose translation in which he has found any enthusiasm." The pseudo Abbé de Laage was highly provoked that the great poet should have mistaken his verses for prose, and he wrote, with a bitterness which he did not seek to conceal, to his confidential friend Caillard, that "the man either scorns to guess, or does not care to explain himself"; then, passing on to a question of political economy, he adds: "I am not more surprised at seeing that great poet talk

nonsense (*déraisonner*) in political economy than in physics and in natural history. Reasoning has never been his strong point."

And yet Voltaire was not wrong. Who could scan the following lines, and find in the arrangement of the so-called long and short syllables the melody which Turgot thought he had stamped them with?—

"Enfin, lorsque l'Aurore a de ses feux blanchi l'horizon,
Lorsque du jour naissant les clartés ont chassé les ombres,
Triste, abattue, elle accourt à sa sœur, la réveille et déposant
Dans son sein la douleur qui l'accable, en adoucit l'amertume."

If Turgot did not succeed in French poetry, he had, at any rate, the good fortune of composing one Latin line which we all remember; it is the one which he wrote under Franklin's portrait:

"Eripuit cœlo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis."

However, the young Abbé de Laulne was not destined to remain long at the Sorbonne; he did not feel called to be a priest. His friends had wished to detain him; they said to him that both his name and his acquirements would quickly push him on in the Church. They assured him that he would very soon become a bishop, and that he could then realise, in the management of a diocese, some of those beautiful dreams of administration which already occupied his mind.

"My dear friends," he answered to them, "take for your own use the advice you give me, since you can follow it. As for me, I find it impossible to wear on my face a mask all my life long."

His father, very ill besides, and who was to die three months later, left him free to do what he thought proper. He gave up the Church for ever, and left the Sorbonne in December, 1750.

## CHAPTER II.

TURGOT LEAVES THE SORBONNE.—HE IS NAMED MAÎTRE DES REQUÊTES.—FREQUENTS THE COMPANY OF THE "PHILOSOPHES" AND THE ECONOMISTS.—WRITES IN THE "ENCYCLOPÉDIE."

TURGOT was twenty-three years old when he left the Sorbonne. His judgment was formed and his method settled. He sought for natural laws, and in order to attain this object he applied himself to distinguish in phenomena of every kind causes from effects, convinced, as he was, that all the errors committed by man are the result of the confusion which people are constantly making between causes and effects. Thus he had arrived, young as he was, to unravel, with an accuracy altogether wonderful and a really incredible quickness, the general reasons of all the particular facts he had to appreciate. One might have said that, whilst he was yet at the Sorbonne, he had already in his mind everything which came out of it afterwards; so that the only work which occupied the last thirty years of his life was simply to produce in the broad daylight what he had acquired

during the eighteen months he spent in that celebrated house.

A consummate philosopher—considering nature and man from the highest standpoints—he had promised to himself, when he was barely twenty years old, that he would write the history of the human mind and of its progress. He had even made of that history, with the view of developing it in a book, a plan which we have still, and of which some of his ulterior works are only part expansions. He was thus, notwithstanding his extreme youth, already armed for life and its struggles; and his years of apprenticeship had made of him one of the men most capable of producing usefully one day fresh truths, in an age when prejudices seemed, however, to possess an irresistible strength.

When we study Turgot on the threshold of his active life, and when we think of the influence he exercised afterwards over the economic destinies of his country, we ask ourselves at once to whom he is like; in what mould he has been cast; to what intellectual family he belongs; and, contrary to what generally takes place, we find no answer, for the simple reason that he proceeds, so to say, from no one. We see very well that he is a man of his own century; but he has known how to issue from it, to penetrate into our own times, by an energy which belongs to him, and without having had any other guide except his reason. The strength of his genius owes its development, not to the action of those who directed his studies, but to the conscientious and philosophical cate-

chising of his faculties by himself. He is the son of his meditations. He was born a master; so much so, that those of whom he was considered the disciple have survived only, thanks to him; and they are admitted by us only because he forces them, so to say, upon us as belonging to his company.

He has, however, with Adam Smith, a resemblance which manifests itself very early. They were about the same age. Adam Smith was born in 1723. The one studied at Paris, the other at Edinburgh, and they pondered over their thoughts independently of each other, for they were not acquainted; and they formed their doctrines by reflection, each one for himself. They both prepared to play the great part which has made their names illustrious, and they did so by the same method, treading with equal steps the road on which they were destined to meet one day.

After having completed their studies, both abandoned for philosophy the Church to which they were originally destined; both held the same views on the progress of the human mind; both sought the law of that progress at the same time, and by the same method—in metaphysics, in moral philosophy, and in political economy. Therefore, it is not astonishing that they should have been alternately one another's inspirer and precursor.

Adam Smith, like Turgot, had thought of writing the history of civilisation and progress, and, in order to accomplish that task, he had never ceased studying man, as Turgot did himself, in his conscience, his language,

and his moral, social, economic life. They thus met later on the philosophical and metaphysical ground, but they met there consciously, a circumstance which had not marked their first meditations. They had been informed of their mutual existence; they knew one another, and we may say, without fear of making a mistake, that from the day on which they became acquainted with one another they helped each other, and both profited by their own works and those of their masters. Turgot's philosophy is much indebted to the Scottish school, to Hutcheson, the master of Adam Smith, and to Adam Smith himself. But Adam Smith's political economy owes quite as much to France, to the economists of the *physiocrate* school, and to Turgot.

Quesnay, Gournay, and Turgot, above all, exercised an evident and happy influence over the author of the *Wealth of Nations*. Turgot's small work, entitled *Sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*, is ten years anterior to the publication of Adam Smith's great treatise on political economy; and these ten years mark precisely the epoch during which Turgot and Adam Smith knew one another, and corresponded on economic subjects. Speaking of Turgot, Condorcet says, "He kept up an active correspondence with Adam Smith."

Finally, we can say of both, that they have been more masters of the nineteenth century which followed their death than of the eighteenth during which they lived. In a speech on the bank of England, delivered before the House of Commons, May 30, 1797, Pulteney was

able to say of Adam Smith, that he would persuade the present generation and govern the next. The same opinion might have been passed on Turgot, for he has persuaded the enlightened minds of the day, without succeeding, however, in ruling over his age, whereas, by his ideas, after his death he has governed, and still governs, French society.

On the 5th of January, 1752, Turgot was called to discharge the duties of deputy solicitor-general; on the 30th of December of the same year he became councillor in the parliament; but it was merely a passage there, or, rather, he was soon connected with it only by the loose ties which still united the *maîtres des requêtes* to the parliament.

Named *maître des requêtes* on the 28th of March, 1753, he exercised exclusively the functions belonging to that post till 1761, upon which he was sent to Limoges as *intendant;* but during the whole time of his *intendance*, from 1761 to 1774, he nevertheless retained the title and prerogatives of the other *maîtres des requêtes*, taking part in their labours, if he thought proper, and sitting amongst them, whenever he happened to be in Paris.

The *maîtres des requêtes* discharged duties both administrative and judicial. They submitted reports to the council in the presence of the committee of state, and sometimes even of the king. They were members of the parliament, and could sit there, provided they were not more than four at a time. The four who arrived first took the places reserved for the body of which they formed a part.

They took a stand in the jurisdiction of the king's council for the affairs submitted to it, and, besides, they constituted a kind of special jurisdiction, that of the *requêtes de l'hôtel.*

It is the council which took up for reconsideration the case of Calas, but it is the *Chambre des requêtes de l'hôtel*, that is to say, the assembly of the *maîtres des requêtes* alone, which pronounced the sentence. Turgot was one of those who sat on that case. "He was one of the judges," says Dupont de Nemours, "and on that occasion he spoke with a vehemence which was not his wont." His address, unfortunately, has not been preserved. There is no report of the deliberation.

Turgot had been received with open arms by the society of the *philosophes*, the *literati*, and the economists. His functions allowed him a great deal of leisure, and he spent the time at his disposal in cultivating his mind and conversing with his friends. It is at Madame Geoffrin's house that he made the acquaintance of D'Alembert, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, Condorcet, Helvétius, and many others. Madame Helvétius was for him an older friend. She was Madame de Graffigny's niece, and he had often seen her at her aunt's before her marriage, and when he was still at the Sorbonne. Madame de Graffigny, who had the habit of giving nicknames to everybody—we remember *Panpan*, that was his friend Devaux; *Maroquin*, his other friend Desmarets; *le Petit Saint*, Saint-Lambert—Madame de Graffigny, we say, never spoke to her niece, Mademoiselle

de Ligneville, without calling her *Minette*. She was very fond of Minette; she was likewise very fond of the young Abbé de Laulne, as Turgot was then called; and the two young people entertained a tender friendship for one another. The good Morellet feels disturbed that this intimacy did not end by a marriage. The marriage, he was convinced of it, would have made the happiness, in the first place, of the young people, and then, in the second, his own. Between the two beings whom he loved most, and who fully reciprocated his affection, he would have lived delightfully, without the necessity of going from the one to the other. "I have often felt astonished," says he, "that the familiarity did not lead to real passion; but whatever may have been the cause of so great a reserve, there had survived from this *liaison* a tender friendship between them."

Some persons have wished to make of Morellet's regret on this *mariage manqué* a kind of historical problem, and treasures of erudition have been spent in endeavours to solve it. Many writers have busied themselves with it. If Turgot has kept the reserve for which Morellet seems to blame him, and if he has allowed the occasion of so thoroughly suitable a marriage to slip away, the reason, some say, is that he was already in holy orders. Such is, at any rate, Delort's opinion, the author of an *Histoire de la détention des philosophes et des gens de lettres à la Bastille.* But this opinion has for its foundation first a very questionable document, besides several others which are of a contradictory nature. It is certain

that in several deeds of the Sorbonne Turgot is called *diacre Parisien* (a deacon of the diocese of Paris). It is equally certain that in other documents, quite as authentic, he is classed amongst the simple *acolytes*. In the former case he must have been ordained; in the latter, he might have remained free. Other writers do not make so much fuss about all this; they find that he was too busy, and they have some difficulty in supposing that he could have divided his time between the serious occupation which already filled his life, and the thousand cares of a household and a family of children. Finally, believing himself to be threatened with hereditary gout, and persuaded that no member of his family lived beyond fifty, Turgot might have dreaded (such is a third version) associating a wife and children to so precarious an existence as his own. At any rate, Turgot did not marry; he left the beautiful Minette at liberty to become Madame Helvétius, and remained, up to the day of his death, her most devoted friend.

At Quesnay's house he saw Mirabeau, "the friend of mankind," Dupont de Nemours, Baudeau, and the *Économistes*. It is also at the house of the leader of the *Économistes* that he met Adam Smith, about the year 1762, when the celebrated writer, not yet known by his works on political economy, came for the first time to France with the young Duke of Buccleugh. Morellet says in his memoirs: "Turgot, who was fond of metaphysics, set a high value on the talent of Adam Smith. We saw him several times." Dupont de Nemours also gives an

account of this meeting, and speaks of Adam Smith, of Turgot, and of himself as having been "fellow-disciples at Quesnay's."

Together with Gournay, finally, Turgot became acquainted with both Trudaines; Albert, who was since *intendant* of the Board of Trade, and lieutenant-general of police in Paris; he knew all these talented and courageous administrators, who maintained liberal doctrines against the councillors of state and the ministers of the day, belonging nearly all, as they did, to the school of Colbert.

He was received at Madame du Deffand's, but never became intimate with her. He very soon forsook her to follow Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, when she, withdrawing from the house of her protectress, founded, in her turn, a society and a *salon.* He had, besides, very little liking for the friend of the marchioness, the Duke de Choiseul, who was to become, later on, his most formidable adversary. He was already considered, not without reason, as hostile to the parliaments, although he numbered amongst them relatives and personal friends to whom he always remained faithful. In 1754 he accepted to become member of a "royal chamber," that is to say, a kind of commission instituted after the exile of the members belonging to one of the courts of parliament, for the purpose of judging, in its stead, the cases which would naturally have come under its cognizance. This circumstance definitely set against him the parliamentarians and the Choiseul coterie.

Then he was, as a matter of principle—and we have already noticed this point—a *government-man;* and his respect for authority kept him aloof from opposition of every kind.

Madame du Hausset relates in her memoirs that, dining one day with Quesnay in Paris, she met there "a young *maître des requêtes*, good-looking, called by the name of an estate which I do not recollect (the estate of Brucourt), but who was son of Turgot, the *prévôt des marchands*. There was a great deal of talk about administration, which did not much amuse me at first, then the love of the French for their king was alluded to; whereupon M. Turgot said: 'That love is not blind; it is a deep sense, and a confused remembrance of great benefits received. The nations, and I shall say Europe and the whole of mankind, are indebted for liberty to a king of France (I forget his name); he established the *communes*, and gave civil existence to an innumerable multitude of men . . . . I requested M. Quesnay to write down what young Turgot had said, and I showed it to Madame (de Pompadour). She then spoke much in praise of that *maître des requêtes*, and having mentioned him to the king, he remarked, 'He comes from a good stock.'"

We must acknowledge that the *économistes* were often excessively inclined to seek the support of authority. In order to realise their ideas, some amongst them would have preferred an honest despot, with whom they could have obtained preponderance for their views, to a

government exercising more freedom, and submitted to influences upon each of which it would have been necessary to act separately. Turgot did not go so far, but he was not in favour of what was already called then "the balance of power," or "the equilibrium of forces," and the other combinations devised for the purpose of checking the power of the chief of the State. His fear was lest the obstacles which some persons wanted to oppose to evil should become hindrances to good. He wished that the prince might exercise, in order to protect the freedom of individuals, what has been called in our own days, through a frequent abuse both of the name and of the thing, the rights of the State. And yet he did not confound the rights of the State or of the prince with those which certain philosophers claimed as belonging to society. "Persons have accustomed themselves too much," said he, "under all governments, to sacrifice always the happiness of individuals to certain pretended rights of society. They forget that society is made for individuals." He considered all authority which extended beyond what is absolutely necessary, as a tyranny, but he never had a very clear notion of what is now called *political guarantees*. He believed too readily that the consultative powers of certain local authorities, and the wide publicity given to their deliberations under the shape of *vœux* (expression or statement of wishes), could hold the place of political freedom, and sufficed to guarantee the rights of the citizens.

Through D'Alembert, Turgot joined the *Encyclopédie*,

and became personally acquainted with Voltaire. It is in 1760 that he went on a pilgrimage to "les Délices." "You shall soon," D'Alembert writes to Voltaire, "have another visit, of which I gave you notice; it is that of M. Turgot, a young man full of philosophy, of intellect, and of knowledge. He is a great friend of mine, and wishes to go and see you *en bonne fortune*. I say *en bonne fortune*, because, *propter metum Judæorum*, he must not boast too much of that visit, nor must you."

After having received Turgot's visit, Voltaire answered to D'Alembert: "I am still quite full of M. Turgot; I was not aware that he had written the article 'Existence.' I have seldom seen a man more amiable and better informed; and, what is seldom to be found in metaphysicians, he has the most delicate and the soundest taste."

Although Turgot had been entirely won over by Voltaire, his passion was not a blind one, and it suffered several eclipses: first, when Voltaire mistook for prose the Abbé de Laage's metrical lines; later, also, when the Ferney patriarch published, under the title of *l'Homme aux quarante écus*, his witty pamphlet against one exclusive taxation. On Voltaire's side there was more constancy; he felt Turgot's dismissal, in 1776, as a personal misfortune. "I see nothing but death before me," he wrote to La Harpe, "since M. Turgot is no longer in office. I cannot understand how the king can have dismissed him. It is a thunderbolt which has struck both my brain and my heart."

Two years afterwards, in 1778, when Voltaire came to Paris in triumph, he wished to see Turgot.

"We have witnessed, in 1778," says Condorcet, "the enthusiasm mixed with tender and deep veneration which the name and the sight of M. Turgot excited in that illustrious old man. We have seen him, in the midst of the public acclamation, weighed down by the wreaths which the whole nation lavished upon him; we have seen him rush with a tottering step to meet M. Turgot, seize hold of his hands in spite of himself, kiss them, wet them with his tears, saying to him in a stifled voice, 'Allow me to kiss the hand which has signed the salvation of the people.'"

Turgot wrote, in 1755, for the *Encyclopédie* five articles which appeared the following year: *Étymologie*, *Existence*, *Expansibilité*, *Foires et marchés*, *Fondations*. He had intended writing several others, such as *Mendicité*, *Inspecteurs*, *Hôpital*, *Immatérialité*, but the publication of the work of the *philosophes* being no longer authorised, he thought it incompatible with his duties as a magistrate to remain one of its contributors.

The appearance of the article "Existence" was a real literary and philosophical event. The world of *literati* and that of the *Encyclopédistes* had been struck by the precision and the clearness of the style, the originality and depth of the ideas. A true writer, a philosopher had revealed himself. The like impression is even to-day produced upon those who read, for the first time, that remarkable paper. Cousin admired it much, and

assigned to it a special place in the philosophical outcome of the eighteenth century.

"As a metaphysician," he says, "Turgot belongs to the school of Locke, like all the men of his age, like Hutcheson and Smith, with whom he has so many points in common; but, like them, he has known how to keep free from all the vices of that school, thanks to the extent and penetration of his intellect, thanks, especially, to the elevation of his sentiments and of his character. In a letter to Condorcet on the book *de l'Esprit*, he exposes the sad and absurd ethical system of Helvétius. . . . . But the article 'Existence' is the best specimen we have of his metaphysics."

## CHAPTER III.

QUESNAY AND GOURNAY.—THE PHYSIOCRATES.—TURGOT'S ECONOMIC DOCTRINE.—ESSAI SUR LA FORMATON ET LA DISTRIBUTIION DES RICHESSES.—ÉLOGE OF GOURNAY.

TURGOT did not separate the economic laws from the other ethical ones, and he prosecuted simultaneously the study of them with equal enthusiasm. According to him, men formed a natural society, and they could reach the degree of prosperity of which they are susceptible only in conditions of which they cannot free themselves. These conditions constitute laws which are not similar to positive laws, and which do not, like these, find their sanction in penalties either of a pecuniary or of a bodily nature, but yet which it is impossible to violate without serious injury. If mankind tries to withdraw itself from the action of these laws, if it disobeys them, it throws an obstacle in the way of its own progress; nor does it realise the amount of comfort and of riches which it might have procured to the individuals which compose it, by respecting them. Such is the general idea which Turgot had of the relations existing between natural law and political economy.

Quesnay was at that time in the full blaze of his glory he had published his maxims, and his *Tableau économique.* His disciples constituted a kind of peculiar society, and treated the master as a sort of god. They assumed the name of *Économistes*, and formed a real sect. Now Turgot did not like the sectarian spirit. In one of his letters on the liberty of the commerce of cereals, we find this passage: "I am well aware that those who have for some time been speaking or writing against liberty in the commerce of cereals, pretend to consider that opinion as exclusively belonging to certain writers who have assumed the name of *Économistes*, and who may have prejudiced a portion of the public by a sectarian air which they have rather clumsily put on, and by a tone of enthusiasm which always displeases those who do not share it."

Although professing for Quesnay the sincerest admiration, Turgot preferred Gournay's intimacy to that of the author of the *Tableau économique.* Gournay, his second master, and the one, perhaps, whom he liked best, had, it is true, adopted Quesnay's ideas; but he laboured in what we might designate as another field of that domain which they had created together, and with which they had enriched the world.

Dupont de Nemours takes much trouble to show the identity of views between these two remarkable men, and he has invented the name of "physiocratie" for the science upon which they were both engaged at the same time. For him Gournay was quite as much of a *physiocrate* as Quesnay.

Quesnay's leading idea was to raise agriculture to the greatest possible state of prosperity. He considered that all the other occupations in the world depended upon the cultivation of the ground, and if he claimed freedom for industry and commerce, it was in order that freedom of commerce, by facilitating the working out and the trade of agricultural produce, should secure to agriculture the means of reaching a high development. "Poor peasants," he said, "make a poor kingdom, and a poor kingdom makes a poor king."

Whilst acknowledging that agricultural interest should be the chief care of statesmen, Gournay was especially anxious to throw light upon the economic questions arising from industry and commerce. He had remarked that competition was the most powerful stimulus to work, and that everyone knows better than the government what is most favourable to his own interest. He had adopted as his maxim the expression: "*Laissez faire, laissez passer.*"

Gournay's own ideas, developed and applied by Turgot, have become modern political economy, the political economy of Adam Smith and of Jean-Baptiste Say.

Turgot's economic doctrines are condensed in two writings of his. The one is an essay on Gournay, which he sent, in 1752, to Marmontel, for the purpose of helping him to compose the *éloge* of their mutual friend.

The second, entitled *Essai sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*, is a sketch of political economy given

by Turgot to two young Chinamen, who, having come to France to prosecute their studies, were on the point of returning to the extreme East.

The last-named essay forms a short work subdivided into one hundred paragraphs. The first seven are meant to prove that the cultivation of the land is the only source of riches. This is Quesnay's own doctrine. All things which are of use to men are produced by the soil. All the preparations which industry makes them undergo, all the changes of place which commerce necessitates, are operations which add no new productions to those which have sprung from cultivated land. Agricultural labour is the only one by which you may increase the wealth of a nation. The land immediately refunds to the cultivator the value of his work, but what it gives him is worth more than the pains he has taken. It is a physical result of the fertility of the soil, which always exceeds the sum of labour by which this fertility has been obtained. The superfluous amount thus granted by nature as a pure gift to the cultivators, beyond the reward of their trouble, allows them to purchase the labour of the other members of society; and these, by selling their labour, mostly earn what is necessary to them for their food and for their daily life. The proprietor-cultivator, whose superfluous income provides the others with work, is thus, according to Turgot, the only producer of wealth, wealth which, by its circulation, animates all the works of society. Society is thus divided into two classes, both equally laborious: the former gets out of the soil a wealth

which is ever reproducing itself; whilst the latter, busy preparing the materials thus produced, receives merely its means of subsistence in return for its labour. The former may be designated as the *producing* class, the latter may be named the *stipendiary* class.

After this preamble, Turgot enumerates in the next paragraphs the various manners of giving value to the soil, and he endeavours to demonstrate by fresh arguments what he has already stated in the first part of his essays, viz., that the soil alone can yield a net produce—that is, something in addition to the expense of culture and to the interest derived from the capitals invested.

The other paragraphs, as far as the fifty-first, are devoted to the question of capitals, to those of specie, of commerce, and of the circulation of money. Before gold and silver had become the representative token of every kind of wealth, the exchanges, according to Turgot, took place in kind. Bushels of corn were then exchanged against pints of wine. The competition between those who had more or less need of this or that article determined a current value for each one of them relatively to all the others. Every article may have thus become the equivalent of all the others, and may have served as a common measure merely to compare the value of all the other articles of merchandise with each other. The same quantity of corn, worth eighteen pints of wine, was equally worth a sheep, or a piece of prepared leather, or a certain quantity of iron, and all these things had thus the same commercial value. But all pints of wine do not

possess the same value; and if eighteen pints of Anjou wine are worth one sheep, eighteen pints of Cape wine are worth a far greater number. In order, therefore, to avoid the mistakes arising from the fact that the same expression applied to objects of variable qualities, people found themselves compelled to select as measure of the value of other merchandise, a merchandise always identical to itself, and which might be, besides, easily transported from place to place, and not liable to undergo any alteration. Gold and silver united all these qualities in a superior degree, and, by the nature of things, they became the universal coinage.

The last fifty paragraphs of Turgot's work treat of the formation of capitals, and of the various uses that can be made of them, whether by purchasing land, or by employing them in an agricultural scheme, an industrial enterprise, or a commercial operation, or, finally, by lending them on interest to those persons who are in need of money.

Whilst examining these five manners of investing capitals, Turgot makes us observe, and he proves what he states, that advances (*capitaux préalables*) are always necessary to those who want to make an enterprise, whatever may be its nature. Agricultural enterprises need these advances as much as all others. Hence the consequence that cultivation, like industry, has its managers and its workmen. The managers supply the capital, and the workmen the manual labour. The mere workmen, tillers of the ground, like the mere industrial

artisans, have no other property but their muscles, no other profit but their salary. If there is no capitalist, that is to say, if there are no capitals, there can be no extensive culture, for it is only through extensive cultivation that the soil can yield all it is capable of yielding.

Cultivation of the soil, and industries of every kind, depend accordingly on an accumulated mass of capitals, or of movable wealth, which return every year into the hands of those persons to whom they belong, in order to be made available and advanced during the following year, thus securing a continuance for the same industries.

Returning, towards the end, to Quesnay's favourite theory, Turgot concludes that the produce of capitals should be exempted from all contribution to the public expense, because it is a produce taken from that of the soil. The income of the proprietors can alone be regarded as free, because it constitutes an available wealth, and available wealth exclusively may be applied to the expenses of the State.

Such is Turgot's celebrated work. It contains, on the questions of capitals, specie, and competition, the most valuable and the newest truths for the epoch in which they were produced. Turgot could not but be, and was necessarily and continually, present to the mind of Adam Smith, when the author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* wrote, nine years later, his *Wealth of Nations.*

But, if the treatise we are noticing is full of truths, we are obliged, on the other hand, to acknowledge that it is

likewise full of errors. It is steeped in Quesnay's thoughts on net produce, incessantly affirming that the soil must be considered as the only source of wealth.

Whilst regretting the errors which have led Turgot astray, one cannot help doing homage to him as to the other *physiocrates.* We must honour them, even on account of their errors; for, if they have committed them, it is only because they made a wrong application of laws which are everlastingly true—laws which Quesnay has had the honour of discovering. The wrong application Turgot made of them has given to these laws such celebrity that all thinkers have known them and accepted them as true.

The *physiocrates* affirmed, to begin with, that the formation of wealth was subject to a natural law, and that in order to enable that law to produce all its effects, and mankind to get rich, men united in society, and constituting nations, should enjoy, in the first place, the liberty of producing, then the liberty of purchasing, selling, and conveying to various localities the produce of cultivation, industry, and commerce; finally, the liberty of accumulating capitals, making them circulate, lending them, employing them for the development of general wealth. That is the first and the highest of the truths for which we are indebted to them.

Another truth which they have taught the world is, that taxes are subject to a natural law of incidence. The State can oblige a class of citizens to pay taxes, but it cannot prevent those who have supplied the specie to

get it refunded to them by others, if the natural law of political economy allows or prescribes it.

The *physiocrates* have triumphantly established that the taxpayers are in most cases nothing else but intermediate parties, whose duty it is to pay the taxes on behalf of those who have finally to do so, thus making out of their own money to the real debtors of the State advances which are recoverable in a longer or shorter delay, with more or less difficulty.

From this observation they have concluded that men who only possess their natural strength, and who support themselves merely by their bodily toil, should not be subjected to the kind of taxes which, by virtue of their nature, have a kind of *reflex* action; for, if obliged to pay under these conditions, the poor would find themselves compelled to advance money to persons richer than themselves. Hence this second truth, not less evident than the first, that taxes should, as much as possible, be raised from the fortune and income of those who, after all, are obliged to bear them.

But how many errors are mixed with these great truths which Quesnay discovered, and Turgot brought so clearly to light? Is it possible to believe, with Turgot and Quesnay, that the soil is the only source of wealth—of *renascent wealth* (*richesses renaissantes*), to employ the very expression which Turgot makes use of? We know at present that all capitals indistinctly, whatever form they affect, whatever may be the employment for which they are destined and the use made of them, provided

the employment and the use are productive, have, just as the soil, the faculty of producing incessantly new riches of which they are the origin. Adam Smith and Jean-Baptiste Say have given of this fact proofs which bring the discussion to a close.

The theory of taxation which recognises no other lawful resource to the budget of public expenditure but what may be raised from the net produce of the nation, is it not also contrary to the truth? As if the State could provide for its yearly expenses by means of fresh riches created every year.

If such an opinion was true, a stationary people, that is to say, a nation the wealth of which would stop increasing, and living merely on a work supported by old accumulations of capitals, could have no right to claim from its members the means of defraying the public expenses. And yet it is impossible to deny that, to whatever amount of wealth it has attained, or to whatever degree of poverty it has become reduced, a country is always obliged to provide, as a community, for certain branches of the public service, and to transform, come what may, some of its private expenditure into public supplies.

The truth is that the taxes should be for everybody an increase of effort or a diminution of enjoyment, and that the yearly savings of the country, if they help towards the expenditure, should not constitute the principal part, much less the only one of the budget resources. A second mistake superadds itself to the

first. Not only does Turgot believe that the treasury cannot be fed except from the net produce of the nation, he further believes that in a nation there is no other net produce but that of landowners; whence he concludes that capitalists, manufacturers, and tradesmen should be exonerated from all taxation, their share in the public contributions being paid by the landowners, they in turn getting refunded by selling dearer to them the articles which constitute the object of their trade or their industry. In a letter dated 1766, and preserved in the Lantheuil archives, David Hume, writing to Turgot, refutes with much earnestness that erroneous doctrine after stating it with the greatest clearness. Hume had devoted the first part of his letter to telling most fully to his friend the incidents of his quarrel with Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

"But I am heartily tired of this subject, as you very well conjecture; and I shall here take my leave of it, I hope for ever. Tho' you must be tired too of my letter, I am tempted to say a word to the political question, which has been often agitated between us, viz., the method of laying on taxes, whether it is better to impose them on landed possessions, or on consumptions. You will own that, as the public revenue is employed for the defence of the whole community, it is more equitable to levy it from the whole; but you say that this is impracticable. It will fall on the land at last, and it is better to lay it on there directly. You suppose, then, that the labourers always raise the price of their labour in proportion to

the taxes. But this is contrary to experience. Labour is dearer in Neufchâtel and other parts of Switzerland, where there are no taxes, than in the neighbouring provinces of France, where there are a great many. There are almost no taxes on the English colonies: yet labour is three times dearer there than in any country of Europe. There are great taxes on consumptions in Holland, but the republic possesses no land on which they can fall.

"The price of labour will always depend on the quantity of labour and the quantity of demand; not on the taxes. The tradesmen, who work in cloth that is exported, cannot raise the price of their labour; because in that case the cloth would become too dear to be sold in foreign markets; neither can the tradesmen, who work in cloth for home consumption, raise their prices, since there cannot be two prices for the same species of labour. This extends to all commodities of which there is any part exported, that is, to almost every commodity. Even were there some commodities of which no part is exported, the price of labour employed in them could not rise: for this high price would tempt so many hands into that species of industry as must immediately bring down the prices. It appears to me that, where a tax is laid on consumption, the immediate consequence is, that either the tradesmen consume less or work more. No man is so industrious but he may add some hours more in the week to his labour: and scarce anyone is so poor but he can retrench something of his expense. What happens where the corn rises in its price? Do

not the poor both live worse and labour more? A tax has the same effect. I beg you also to consider, that, besides the proprietors of land and the labouring poor, there is, in every civilised community, a very large and a very opulent body, who employ their stocks in commerce, and who enjoy a great revenue from their giving labour to the poorer sort. I am persuaded, that in France and England, the revenue of this kind is much greater than that which arises from land. For besides merchants, properly speaking, I comprehend in this class all shopkeepers and master tradesmen of every species. Now it is very just that these should pay for the support of the community, which can only be where taxes are laid on consumptions. There seems to me no pretence for saying that this order of men are necessitated to throw their taxes on the proprietors of land, since their profits and income can surely bear retrenchment. After so long a letter, you will surely excuse my concluding without any ceremony or compliment. Be only assured that no man puts a higher and juster value on your friendship than I do.

"DAVID HUME."

That is a very sound lesson on political economy given to Turgot twelve months before he published his *Essai sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*, and nine years before Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Turgot replied, and his answer, which has been preserved by Hill Burton, bears date March 25, 1767. He acknowledges that the law of supply and demand deter-

mines the price of labour. "You rightly observe," says he, "that the amount of salaries is determined not by that of the taxes, but only by the relation between supply and demand. That principle has never been called in question; it is the only principle which immediately fixes the price of all articles having a commercial value." And in order to explain the apparent contradiction with Quesnay's doctrine, he distinguishes two prices, "the current price fixed by the relation between supply and demand, and the fundamental one, which for an article of merchandise is what the workman has to pay for that article." It is in this distinction that Turgot might have found an answer to his detractors when they accused him, as they do still, of condemning the workman to perpetual misery by subjecting him to the iron law of salary.

Turgot, like Quesnay, divided mankind into two classes: the *producing* and the *stipendiary*, the *producing* and the *barren*. The workman does not help towards forming a new produce, he can take no share in it, and his salary secures to him merely the strict necessaries of his life—his subsistence. "In every kind of labour," says Turgot in his *Essai sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*, "it must happen, and it does happen, that the workman's salary is limited to what is necessary to secure him his subsistence."

Louis Blanc protests against this theory. "Turgot was unfortunate enough to adopt the principle which has in our own times been identified with the cowardly and

cruel formula: *chacun pour soi, chacun chez soi*, and the principle once admitted, supposing the consequences are fatal, what is to be done? *That must happen.* Of course it *must* happen that the workman is reduced to what is strictly necessary, when the starting point is taken in individual right; but would it be the same in a *régime* of brotherly association?"

Turgot placed the germ of his defence in his letter of March 25, 1767. The *iron* law, he would have answered, determines the fundamental value of labour, the law of supply and demand fixes the current price. "Although the fundamental price," says he, "is not the immediate principle of the current value, there is, nevertheless, a minimum, below which it cannot descend; for if a merchant loses on his goods, he ceases to sell or to produce; if a workman cannot live on his labour, he becomes a mendicant, or leaves his native country. That is not all: a workman must find a certain profit, to provide against accidents, to bring up his family . . . The workman, as you say, does his best to work more and to consume less, but that is only transitory. There certainly is no man who works as much as he could; but it is not natural, on the other hand, that men should work as much as they could, for the same reason that a rope cannot be stretched to its full possibility of being so. In every machine there is a degree of relaxation necessary, without which it might run the risk of being broken at any moment . . . This species of superfluous amount from which we can, strictly speaking, retrench, is another necessary element in the

ordinary maintenance of workmen and of their families."

Turgot looked upon the English as very little qualified to understand Quesnay. "Our economist philosophers," he wrote to Hume, July 23, 1766, "followers of Quesnay, will maintain vigorously their master's system. It is a system from which English writers are at present very far; nor can we hope to see them adopt it for a long time to come, so difficult is it to conciliate its principles with the ambition of monopolising the commerce of the universe."

He was not converted by his friend's correspondence; his plan was settled (*son siège était fait*); *physiocrate* he was, *physiocrate* he remained. David Hume could not but mourn over this, for, if he was fond of Turgot, he was not fond of the economists. Witness this humorous letter which he wrote to the Abbé Morellet, May 15th, 1769:

"I see that, in your prospectus, you take care not to disoblige your economists, by any declaration of your sentiments; in which I commend your prudence. But I hope that in your work you will thunder them, and crush them, and pound them, and reduce them to dust and ashes! they are, indeed, the set of men the most chimerical and the most arrogant that now exist, since the annihilation of the Sorbonne. I ask your pardon for saying so, as I know you belong to that venerable body. I wonder what could engage our friend M. Turgot to herd among them; I mean, among the economists; though I believe he was also a Sorbonnist."

Turgot always remained faithful to Quesnay's doctrine; he always affirmed it with the deepest conviction. We may even say that he made it his own personal doctrine by the vigour with which he explained it. We must not forget, however, that he did not belong to the strict sect (*la petite église*), that no one acknowledged him as the sworn, official interpreter of the Master; against this assertion he would have protested quite as much as the others, nay, more; and he felt a strong repugnance to ascribe to Quesnay's maxims that dogmatic value which initiated people have always attached to the ideas of founders of sects.

Outside the limits of the school of economists, properly so called, he numbered friends and even masters. He professed for Gournay a respect equal to that which he had for Quesnay. He lived with him on terms of more familiar intimacy.

If we would understand his doctrine we must not therefore be satisfied with seeking its meaning in the *Essai sur la formation et la distribution des richesses;* we must also trace its development in his conversations with Gournay.

We do not mean to say that in the course of the studies which he prosecuted in conjunction with Gournay, Turgot modified, on the subject of the share held by the land in the production of riches, the fundamental ideas which he had derived from Quesnay; nor did he, in his conversations with Gournay, acknowledge the errors into which he might previously have fallen.

The *Essai sur la formation et la distribution des richesses* is posterior to Gournay's death; but the theory of the freedom of work, commerce, and industry, that theory which made up, strictly speaking, the whole of Gournay's system of political economy, has received from Turgot such lustre through the applications he drew from it, and the wonderful proofs he gave of the happy results which might be produced by it, that people have forgotten the errors of the net produce, and of the excessive preponderance of the soil over capitals of a movable nature

The inquiry as to the net produce which should supply the substance of taxation and the *théorie foncière* which sees in the soil the only source of wealth, have simply become hypotheses explaining the great law of the natural incidence of taxation, and bringing into light the admirable maxim which says that there is no rich State where the people are poor, whence this other consequence, no less incontestable in its truth, that a State cannot become rich when it ruins the taxpayers. If we look upon certain economic prolegomena as hypotheses, we may say that Quesnay's theories have proved as useful to the progress of economic sciences as other theories, now abandoned, on the emission of light and the nature of electricity have proved to the progress of physical science. Turgot made use of them like the most eminent men of his time; but it is independently of these hypotheses, and by affirming the freedom of labour and of trade, it is by establishing the doctrine of the freedom

of labour on an indestructible basis, that he has been the forerunner of Adam Smith, perhaps his master, and that he deserves to be regarded as the real chief of the modern school of economists.

Gournay, whose real name was Vincent, was born at Saint-Malo in 1712. When seventeen years of age his parents sent him to Cadiz to learn trade; he succeeded in the undertaking. In 1744 his business brought him back to France, and led to his becoming acquainted with Maurepas, who found out his merit. Two years later his partner, Jametz de Villebarre, left him his fortune, including the Gournay estate, of which he then assumed the name. He had minutely studied both England and Holland, which he had visited, and he read with much eagerness the books which treated of the science of commerce. The treatises of Josias Child and John de Witt's memoirs were the works from which he derived the first elements of his economic knowledge. In 1748 he retired from business, and came to reside in Paris. M. de Maurepas induced him to look out for a post of *intendant du commerce*, and made him obtain one in 1751. It is then that he became connected with the econmists.

Dupont de Nemours, who lays great stress on the unity of the economic school, asserts that Gournay and Quesnay arrrived at the same results by different roads, that they met then, congratulated one another on that circumstance, and applauded each other when they saw with what exactness their principles, various, but equally true, led to absolutely similar consequences. He admits

at the same time that the two aspects under which they considered "the principles of public administration" had formed two schools: the one is Quesnay's, the chief members of which were the Marquis de Mirabeau, Abeille, Fourqueux, Bertin, Dupont de Nemours, the Abbé Roubaud, Le Trosne. Mercierde la Rivière and the Abbé Baudeau formed, as Dupont de Nemours remarks, a distinct branch in that school. They thought that it would be easier to persuade a prince than a nation, and that freedom of commerce and of labour, together with the true principles of public taxation, should be more quickly established by the authority of sovereigns than by the progress of reason. Although all economists did not share that way of thinking, many followed in the same direction, and we have seen that Turgot could be, not unreasonably, found fault with for not having assigned sufficient importance to the part played by political freedom in a nation.

The second school is that of Gournay; it included Malesherbes, the Abbé Morellet, Trudaine de Montigny, Cardinal de Boisgelin, the Abbé de Cicé, and, in general, Turgot's private friends, together with Turgot himself.

It is whilst Gournay was *intendant du commerce* that he had with Turgot the most intimate relations. Condorcet alludes to the conferences Turgot held with him. "From these," says he, "Turgot derived the greatest profit; he learnt from M. de Gournay to know minutely all the advantages of free trade, all the drawbacks of prohibitions." Between 1753 and 1756 Gournay made in the

provinces a series of official journeys, with the view of ascertaining personally the state of manufactures and of commerce. He visited in succession Burgundy, Lyonnais, Dauphiné, Provence, Upper and Lower Languedoc; then, later on, Maine, Anjou, and Brittany, taking Turgot as his companion.

On his return from the 1756 journey he fell ill, languished for a few years, and died, June 27, 1759. Marmontel conceived the idea of writing his *éloge;* he mentioned it to Turgot, asking him for some notes. Shortly after, Gournay's friend sent to Marmontel an essay containing a very faithful and clear statement of his doctrines.

This essay has been published by Dupont de Nemours under the title of *Éloge de Gournay.* It completes the *Essai sur la formation des richesses,* and makes up with it the doctrinal part of Turgot's work.

Gournay did not think that it was within the province of the government to fix the price of articles of consumption, to proscribe one kind of industry for the purpose of encouraging another. He said that for a century all well-informed persons in Holland and in England looked upon the abuses which still prevailed in France as remains of barbarism, as proofs of the weakness and the ignorance of those who had governed France till then, without having found out the importance of liberty, or, if they had found it out, without having known how to protect it against the spirit of monopoly.

The general liberty of selling and of buying seemed to him the only means of securing, on the one hand, to sellers a trade-price sufficiently high to encourage production; and, on the other, to the consumers the best articles possible, considering the purchasing prices. There were, he acknowledged, rogues amongst the merchants and dupes amongst purchasers, but he maintained that it was for private individuals to look after themselves, and that it was absurd to provide all children with padded caps (*bourrelets*), under the plea that children are liable to fall, and to hurt themselves when they do fall.

Turgot sums up in the three following propositions Gournay's doctrine, which he has made his own:

First: "Restore to every branch of industry that precious freedom which they had lost through the prejudice of ages of ignorance, the ease with which governments condescended to private interests, and the desire of reaching a misunderstood perfection."

Secondly: "Facilitate labour to all the members of the State, so as to excite the greatest amount of competition in sales; the necessary result of this will be the greatest perfection in manufactures, and the most advantageous price for the purchaser."

Thirdly: "Give to the purchaser the greatest possible number of competitors, by throwing open to the trader all the outlets of his article of consumption: this is the only way of securing to labour its reward, and of perpetuating production, of which that reward is the sole object."

Such was Gournay's system, adopted and explained by Turgot—system, as it has been called, resting upon the maxim that "every man knows his own interests much better than another, to whom these interests are a matter of complete indifference."

Those who attacked Gournay's opinions represented him as an enthusiast and *homme à système.* "The name of *homme à système,*" says Turgot, "has become a kind of weapon on the lips of all persons either prejudiced or interested in retaining certain abuses; and it is levelled against all those who propose changes in any order of ideas whatever."

## CHAPTER IV.

INTENDANCE OF LIMOGES.—SURVEY OF THE DISTRICT.—LOANS ON INTEREST AND USURY. —LETTERS ON FREEDOM IN THE COMMERCE OF CEREALS.

AFTER the death of Gournay, Turgot retained for two more years the office of acting *maître des requêtes;* but, thinking of becoming an *intendant*, and with the view of preparing for the post, he asked M. de la Michodière's leave to accompany him on his inspections.

France was divided into forty provinces and thirty-five *généralités.*

The provinces were military divisions under the command of a governor; the *généralités* were administrative circumscriptions directed by an *intendant.* Their extent was not uniform, and their limits were not the same. There were almost always several governors for one *intendant*, and several *intendants* for one governor, but their functions were independent of each other. The *intendants* were financial agents, such as the directors of our taxes; but they decided on certain litigious cases concerned with taxes, as our *conseils de préfecture;* and their attributions included, besides, as in the case of

our prefects, the police, public charities, the militia. Their power was the more considerable, because they were in constant relations with the Council of State, and that, preserving their title of *maître des requêtes*, they took their sitting with the other *maîtres des requêtes* during the frequent stays they made in Paris.

Turgot was appointed on the 8th of August, 1761, to the *intendance* of Limoges. "It is to Limoges that I am sent," he wrote to Voltaire, August 24th, 1761. "I should have far preferred Grenoble, which would have placed me within easy reach of the chapel of Confucius, thus enabling me to receive instruction from the high-priest." The Limoges *intendance* comprised five *élections:* Brive, Tulle, Limoges, Bourganeuf, and Angoulême. The country was poor, and overwhelmed with taxation. "I think I am right in asserting," says Turgot, "that the taxation of the Limoges *généralité* amounts to between 48 and 50 per cent. of the total produce, and the king gets out of the soil nearly as much as the landowners."

For the space of thirteen years Turgot devoted himself, with an energy which was never abated for a single instant, to the interests of his *généralité;* but he could not please everybody. In 1774, when he left it to become a cabinet-minister, some persons affirmed that he had made himself adored, whilst others declared that he was detested. Both parties were right, no doubt. The Limousin nobility were accustomed to make use of the *intendance* for the purpose of obtaining favours, getting the land-tax and the poll-tax of their *protégés* reduced,

and reducing to the lowest possible amount their own capitation-duties. They never forgave Turgot for breaking with traditions which were so favourable to them. They readily called him, as they had done in the cases of Gournay, a man *à projets et à système.* "Yes, Madam, he is systematic," exclaimed the Abbé Baudeau, talking to a lady whom he does not name, but of whom he says that she was a witty court *bégueule*, and one of the mothers of the Jesuitic Church; "yes, Madam, he is systematic .... Do you think, then, that to govern a kingdom like France, unconnected ideas and routine are needful?" He had accordingly made many enemies throughout the small gentry of the district. But if the Limousin nobility felt hostile towards him, it was not the same with the peasantry. His departure was publicly announced from the pulpit by all the *curés* of the province, who everywhere celebrated mass for his sake. The labourers interrupted their work in order to be present, and repeated: "The king has done right in taking M. Turgot, but it is very sad for us not to have him any longer."

We cannot write the history of his administration, nor give a complete analysis of what he called his Limousin works: that would be too extensive an undertaking, and it would lead us, besides, into details which are uninteresting just now; but, to make our readers understand Turgot's genius, we must bring out the loftiness of views with which he never ceased to treat the administrative questions on which he had to decide. There was not a

single case, however trifling in itself, which did not afford him the opportunity of affirming principles. The circulars to his agents, his letters to the minister, his advices to the council, are so many treatises on economic theories and laws. Such are his *Avis sur l'assiette et la répartition de la taille* (1762-1770), his *Mémoire sur les prêts à intérêt et sur l'usure* (1769), his *Lettres sur la liberté du commerce des grains* (1770); and the most astonishing fact is, that all he writes seems extemporised. He does not require long studies to trace up effects to their causes; his first education, the habits of his mind, the uprightness of his judgment immediately show him the main substance of things, and he penetrates into it without either hesitation or confusion. We do not mean to imply that he was satisfied with a first glance, that he neglected details, and was not hard-working; on the contrary, he toiled immensely, and the numerous attacks of gout from which he suffered never turned him aside from what he had to do. His only rest was when he indulged in his intimate letters—and he had many correspondents. To Caillard he talked of poetry, communicating to him his translations from Horace or Pope, and sending him, with the view of being despatched anonymously to Ferney, the metrical lines which Voltaire mistook for prose. He argued on the pronunciation of the ancients, and could not pardon David Hume for believing that the old Romans pronounced Latin after the English fashion, saying *e* for *a*, *i* for *e*, and *you* for *u*. With Condorcet he exchanged views on philosophy, on

ethics, on science. His mind was never more free than when it was most occupied.

However, the interest of the people subject to his administration was the unceasing object of his anxiety. One of his chief occupations during the early years of his *intendance* had been the revision of the taxation-lists. The land-tax was assessed in Limousin then according to a tariff devised twenty years before by M. de Tourny. The late *intendant* had wished to correct the abuses arising from arbitrary assessment, and with that view he had conceived the plan of recasting all the old valuations of the produce of the estates, and also the settling of a basis of normal imposition founded upon a kind of survey. But the land-surveying had been finished only in one part of the province, two-thirds of it, and the valuations had been stopped in most cases after a mere inspection of the localities, a glance, so to say, or a bird's-eye view, and by masses of culture.

Such glaring inequalities had resulted from this arrangement, that the populations had found no relief, either in the giving up of the arbitrary taxation, or in the carrying out of so incomplete a survey. Turgot deemed it necessary to do the whole thing over again, and to undertake a general revision.

It was a real survey he had in view; he wanted to draw up in some measure a description of the province, estate by estate, a geometrical one, given in a plan, and which might be preserved and kept correct as changes took place in the consistency and nature of all the estates. But the establishment of a survey with measurements

and valuations has always been and must always be a very long, very difficult, and very expensive work.

"If I had known then," Turgot writes in 1762 to the comptroller-general, "as distinctly as I know to-day, the overwhelming amount of work necessary not only to perfect the operations for the future, but to draw the present system out of its confusion, I should perhaps never had had the courage to undertake it."

He did not, at any rate, save his trouble; he took the utmost care to enlighten the commissioners, the landlords, and the peasants on all the questions raised by the revision. In order to educate the public, he caused the Limoges Agricultural Society to propose a prize on the theory of taxation; and, with the view of opposing administrative prejudices, he constantly put forward in his letters and his advices to the council and to the comptroller-general, *à propos* of the smallest details, the most general questions, and the very discussion of the principle of taxation.

For Turgot the land-tax should be a fixed and real one. It should be fixed; "it is most important to distribute the tax which estates are to bear according to a fixed evaluation." It should be real, "and be assessed only according to the inheritance which each taxpayer enjoys, and the income he derives from it." The taxation of persons shocks by itself," says he, "because a person is nothing else but a heap of wants. . . ."

In his *Plan de mémoire sur les impositions*, Turgot examines the point of *quotité* (each one paying a portion of his revenue) with reference to the system of *répar-*

*tition*, by virtue of which each person pays a portion of the sum required by the government. You may ask each one for a part of his income: that is the system of *quotité*. You may be satisfied with asking the nation, each province, each community a fixed sum to be divided afterwards amongst the landowners: that is the system of *répartition*. He finds great advantages in the system of *quotité*. The State collecting a proportionate part of the revenue would be, according to him, the real owner of that part of the revenue. In sales and purchases an arrangement might be made on the same footing. The purchasers would end by no longer buying the share of the State. After some time nobody would pay any taxes. The public revenue would increase in the same proportion as the riches of the nation, since it would form part of them. "The wealth of the king would be the measure of the wealth of the people, and the administration, always struck by the reaction of its faults, would derive instruction from an experience of every moment, from the mere calculation of the yield of the taxes."

In spite of so many advantages, the thing nevertheless seems to him impossible, because in the *quotité* system the government stands alone against all, everyone being interested in concealing the amount of his property, and no one being interested in stating the truth. He further adds a consideration which has lost nothing of its force, because the general method of working the land has much less changed in France since the last hundred

and twenty years than many people fancy. The consideration is this: if in the countries where cultivation is managed on a large scale the price of the farming gives us the basis of the land-tax, it is not the same in *métayage* countries where there are no leases, and where, accordingly, that kind of control disappears; he adds that the whole of the land is not farmed out; quite the reverse: "hardly one-third of the kingdom is cultivated by farmers."

As for trusting to the honesty of the persons who make their statements, it is not a practical manner of recovering the taxes; then he ends, by the following conclusion, which is not a very cheerful one, but which witnesses to a very deep knowledge of the human heart: "Fraud," says he, "would be very common, *and, therefore, would not be dishonest.*" He accordingly recommends the plan of a fixed assessment.

For him the land-tax should be a fixed charge, determined by means of a fixed survey, this resulting from a measurement of land and a classification of the various estates according to their quality. This system, which he makes so much of, is simply the one which the National Assembly established in France. It still subsists at the present day. The advantages and drawbacks inherent to it are still those pointed out by Turgot, and the same questions are still discussed as at the epoch when it was endeavoured to perfect the fixed assessment (*répartition*) in the provinces where fixed assessment (*répartition*) was in use, and to introduce it in those where the contrary system (viz., non-fixed assessment) prevailed.

In 1769 there took place at Angoulême one of those commercial crises which we rather erroneously designate to-day as monetary crises; the cause of it was the impossibility in which certain speculators found themselves of supporting the excessive circulation of paper issued as accommodation-bills. Hence stoppages of payment, failures, and even bankruptcies; engagements falling due could not be renewed, discount had become impossible, commercial operations were suspended, no money was available for any business, and the soundest merchants had absolutely lost all credit. The tradesmen who sold stuffs for the consumption of the town having applied, according to custom, to Lyons for their orders, answer had been sent to them that no transaction would be carried on with Messieurs d'Angoulême except on ready-money terms.

Since those days crises of the same kind have often taken place. The over-circulation of paper always leads to an increase in the value of money; speculators are then obliged to liquidate, and both the guilty and the careless lenders who trusted them are included in the same ruin. But the 1769 crisis at Angoulême had a special character which was destined to aggravate considerably its consequences.

The men who had circulated the accommodation-bills formed a band of scoundrels who had agreed to benefit by their very bankruptcy in charging the discounters with usury, and denouncing them on that ground to the *sénéchal* of Angoulême. "The disturbance of all com-

mercial operations," says Turgot, "alarm spread amongst the merchants of a town, and the way in which their fortune is affected, constitute a great evil. A greater evil still is the triumph of a set of rogues who, after taking advantage of the credulity of private individuals to obtain money on the security of fraudulent bills, have had the cunning guiltier still of seeking in badly understood laws the means not only of warding off the pursuits of their creditors, but of exercising against these creditors the most cruel vengeance: ruining them, defaming them, and enriching themselves with the spoils." Turgot accordingly proposed to bring before the council the charges of usury submitted to the *sénéchal* of Angoulême, and to appoint for the purpose of judging these charges a commission which should at the same time be required to draw up a declaration and to fix the jurisprudence on the subject of commercial loans made on interest.

In agreement with these conclusions the council summoned the case before it; the pursuits directed against the lenders were quashed, and it was expressly forbidden to institute any such in future; but no declaration took place; the law asked by Turgot was not made, and the legislation respecting the rate of interest remained obscure as it was before, and abandoned to the arbitrary decision of the judges.

In support of his demand for bringing the above case before the council, Turgot, always accustomed to treat from the most general point of view, on the occasion of special cases, the business submitted to him, handed over

to the Council of State a memoir which is the most complete and most perfect work ever written on the subject of lending money on interest, and of usury, work which immediately placed the author amongst our best writers.

The subject is divided into three parts:—First, the necessity of loans on interest for the requirements of trade and industry is demonstrated; the rate of interest varies, in the first place, according to the abundance or scarcity of capitals; in the second, according to the certainty of the repayment or the risk attending it. Secondly, Turgot refutes the arguments of scholastic divines, lawyers, and theologians. Thirdly, he inquires into the historical causes, which, by rendering usury odious, have spread about in the world an opinion unfavourable to capitalists who lend their money, Lastly, in a conclusion very soundly argued, he asks that loans on interest should be deemed lawful; the rate of interest to be fully discussed between the lenders and the borrowers; the usurers who trade on the passions and inexperience of the young to be punished only by laws similar to those which are applied to cases of abuse of confidence and other forms of deceit.

According to him, there is no commercial locality where the greater part of enterprises do not result from borrowed money; and there is no capitalist who would consent to deprive himself of money which he could turn to use, if he did not find in it a corresponding advantage. If lent money did not bear any interest, it would not be

lent; and if the law forbade loans on interest, either it would be violated, or commerce would come to a standstill. But if loans on interest are necessary, and if a trade in money takes place, money must be looked upon as a kind of merchandise, the price of which depends upon an agreement between the contracting parties, and is submitted, like all other goods, to the law of supply and demand. What fault can there be found with the borrower who, making his lender run a risk, consents to pay over to him a high rate of interest; or with the lender who protects himself against risks by an increase in his price? No law, whether civil or religious, obliges one person to procure to another gratuitous help; why then should a civil or a religious law prohibit anyone from procuring money at a price which the borrower consents to pay for his own advantage? The lawfulness of interest is an immediate consequence of property, of the right which the proprietor exercises over what belongs to him. The proprietor of a thing can either sell it or let it; the price of the sale or of the letting is always fair when the will of both parties has been free, and when there has been no fraud on either side. These principles are universally acknowledged when anything else but money is concerned; why should they not be applied to money as well as to everything else? And if you say that it is want which obliges the borrower to accept the lender's terms, could it not be answered that it is want also which drives a man to the baker's? Has the baker less right to receive the price of the loaf which he sells, and can the

purchaser take the baker's loaf without having paid its value?

Scholastic divines, in order to attack loans on interest, have started from an argument which some persons ascribe to Aristotle; and, under the plea that money does not produce money, they have concluded that it is not lawful to get money out of money by means of loans. The alleged sterility of money is nothing else but a glaring error resulting from a wretched misunderstanding. Those who maintain and spread it, forget that money is the necessary instrument of all agricultural, industrial, and commercial enterprises; they forget that although some persons consider it as barren, it is amongst all the people of the world the equivalent not only of all the goods, of all the effects which might perhaps be regarded as barren, but of all landed estates which, nevertheless, yield a very real income.

The argument of the jurists, and of Pothier, amongst others, is different. "Equity," says he, "requires that in a contract which is not gratuitous, the values given on both sides should be equal; that each party should not give more than what it has received, nor receive more than what it has given. Now all that the lender requires in the loan, in addition to the principal loan itself, is a thing which he receives beyond what he has given, since, by receiving the principal loan exclusively, he receives the exact equivalent of what he has given."

Pothier's argument is the one which Thomas Aquinas made use of. The *fongible* articles (articles which can

be weighed, measured, counted, and replaced in kind) which constitute the object of a loan have no use distinguishable from the article itself; if you sell that use at the price of interest required, you sell a thing which does not exist. Turgot looks upon that argument as a tissue of errors and of misunderstandings which can be easily unravelled. In every convention having for its basis two reciprocal conditions, there can be injustice only if there has been violence, fraud, bad faith, abuse of confidence. Between two values exchanged, between two objects given and received, there can never be anything like metaphysical equality or inequality. The equality of value depends upon the opinion of the contracting parties as to the degree of usefulness of the things exchanged for the satisfaction of their wants or their desires. But, after discussing the inequality, people add, as if this was an instance of inequality, that in returning more than the capital to the person who has lent him money, the borrower gives more than he received, and they call this a case of injustice. This reasoning supposes that the money received to-day and the money to be repaid a year hence are two things perfectly equal. Is there not, on the contrary, between these two things a palpable inequality and difference, and the well-known proverb, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," does it not naïvely express that inequality and that difference?

Finally, the last argument against the validity of loans on interest is taken from the Bible. We read in St.

Luke's gospel: "Mutuum date, nihil inde sperantes" (Lend, hoping for nothing again); people of common-sense would see in that passage merely a precept of charity, and it would be impossible to interpret the text otherwise if we replace it in the sentence from which it has been taken: "Verum tamen, diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite, et *mutuum date nihil inde sperantes*, et erit merces vestra multa et eritis filii Altissimi, quia ipse benignus est super ingratos et malos." (But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil.) For Turgot, any man who reads this text without any prejudice, must see in it a precept of charity. The true meaning of the passage is none other than if it had been said: As men, as Christians, you are all brethren, all friends. Deal with each other as brethren, as friends; help each other in your needs; let your purses be open to each other; and do not sell the assistance which you owe to one another.

The real origin of the opinion which condemns loans on interest and usury is to be found in the outcry of nations to whom usurers have always been hateful. It is pleasant to get money, it is hard to have to return it. In societies just starting, people do not borrow much for commercial purposes, they do so only for the necessities of life; money can be returned only if fortunate circumstances occur, and the lender runs the risk that such circumstances may not take place.

Accordingly, in these conditions the rate of interest cannot but be very high. At Rome it was excessive. The severity of the laws against debtors—laws made by the rich—roused the indignation of the people against their creditors. In all the republics of antiquity the abolition of debts has always been the wish of the multitude, and the watch-word of the ambitious men who wanted to curry the popular favour. When Christianity appeared, it offered itself to the people as the religion which stood up to protect the poor; preachers naturally adopted an opinion which had become the cherished one of the poor, and they confounded loans on interest with the severity of the prosecutions directed against insolvent debtors. Hence the tendency manifested by the doctors of the Church to consider loans on interest as unlawful.

The causes, however, which had formerly made loans on interest hateful have ceased to act with the same force. Trade has multiplied *ad infinitum*, and it employs immense capitals. Loans made by the poor to provide for their living are only an infinitesimal fraction of the whole amount of such transactions. The persons to whom most loans are made are the rich, industrious men, those, generally, who hope to derive profits from the money they borrow.

The name of usurers is now given exclusively to lenders of small sums of money at an exorbitant interest for a week (*prêteurs à la petite semaine*), to a few pawnbrokers who advance money on pledges to inferior *bourgeois* and to distressed workmen; finally, to the contemptible wretches

whose business it is to supply at enormous interest to dissipated young men of good family wherewith to carry on their licentious behaviour and their extravagant expenses. The *prêteurs à la petite semaine* enable, after all, petty tradesmen to earn their livelihood; pawnbrokers lend money on pledges which the borrower has no need of, and the poor man thinks himself lucky to find a momentary relief, without any other danger but that of losing his pledge. The common people feel grateful rather than indignant towards these small usurers who assist them in time of need, although they sell that assistance very dear.

The only money-lenders really injurious to society are those, therefore, who make a business by advancing money to young spendthrifts. But their real crime consists not in being usurers, but in facilitating and encouraging the extravagances of young men. They should be punished on that ground, and not for the rate of interest paid over to them.

When we read in the original, from beginning to end, the memoir of which we have just given the summary, we are struck by the power of the arguments employed, and we are forced to acknowledge that in writing it Turgot has really exhausted the subject. The discussion started by Turgot one hundred and twenty years ago, in the king's council, has very often been revived since; it is not yet finished, and it is perhaps not nearly being so. The champions of freedom in the matter of loans on interest have made many excellent speeches; but what

ever may have been their merit, their eloquence, the readiness of their developments, they have merely reproduced Turgot's arguments in the language of the day. There is only one arsenal in which perfect weapons can be found wherewith to fight the successors of the scholastic divines and of Pothier. That arsenal is the memoir on money-loans delivered to the king's council in 1769, with the view of supporting the summary made to that council of the prosecutions on a charge of usury first brought before the *sénéchal* of Angoulême.

Next to the dearth of capitals, the history of which we have related, the *généralité* of Limoges had to suffer from another dearth, namely that of cereals, a much more formidable one than that of money, a redoutable scourge at all times, but still more so in countries where means of communication are rare, as they were in France at that time, and when popular prejudices, encouraged by the most influential representatives of the administration and the magistracy, render the trade in corn extremely dangerous. The royal declaration of 1763 and the edict of 1764 had sanctioned "the free circulation of corn" within the kingdom; but that freedom was constantly threatened by the local parliaments and the municipal officers. Thus the Bordeaux parliament, by a decree dated January 17th, 1770, had ordered the landlords and farmers of Limousin and of Périgord to carry every week to the markets a quantity of corn sufficient for the supply of the said markets, prohibiting them, at the same

time, from selling corn either wholesale or in retail elsewhere than in these markets.

The *échevins* (aldermen) of the small town of Turenne had not respected the law any better. They had forbidden the exportation of cereals from the mills of the town, ordering the landlords to leave "their corn on the spot, receiving in return the value in ready money at the market price"; finally, the Angoulême *lieutenant de police* had been bold enough to issue a decree ordering all persons having corn in their houses, either warehoused or otherwise, to keep only what was strictly necessary for their consumption and that of their families, directing them at the same time to forward the overplus to the market under a penalty of one thousand livres fine. This was adding to the local dearth, which was very serious by reason of the failure of the harvest, a more general one resulting from the impossibility of supplementing by commercial means the deficit existing in the generality. Warned of the danger, Turgot adopted the most energetic measures. He insisted before the council to obtain from them the quashing of the Bordeaux decree. He ordered the Turenne municipality to cease their opposition to the export of cereals. He obtained a decree of the council prohibiting the lieutenant of police of Angoulême from carrying out his order. At the same time he caused to be distributed a large number of copies of the royal declaration of 1763, and of the edict of 1764 on the free circulation of corn, together with Le Trosne's work, entitled *la Liberté du commerce des grains*,

*toujours utile, jamais nuisible;* for he used to say, "Orders even should be sown in prepared ground." Nor was he satisfied with these somewhat passive measures; he organised relieving offices, compelled the landlords to supply their dependents with food, and opened docks for the construction of roads and highways.

The political difficulties, however, which the high price of corn could not fail to raise, not only at Limoges, but in many provinces, had seriously shaken the confidence of the Abbé Terray (supposing it was sincere: and this is doubtful) in the efficaciousness of the free circulation of corn which the *contrôleur général* Bertin had allowed by the edict of 1764; the Abbé Terray resolved accordingly upon recalling the edict. Before carrying out his plan, and although quite resolved upon doing so for all sorts of reasons, some of which were far from honourable, he communicated it to the *intendants*, asking them their opinions.

It is on this occasion that Turgot wrote his celebrated letters on the free circulation of corn. He extemporised them during his journey of inspection, whilst he was making the *département* (to use the language of the day), or the dividing the charge of the land-tax between the *élections*, the *subdélégations*, and the *communes*. It was winter, and cold in the mountain districts; the resting-places were few and badly appointed. It was whilst travelling under very painful conditions, especially for a man subject to gout and rheumatism, that he wrote them *currente calamo*. Nothing is more astonishing than the ease with which

our *intendant* could finish, unfavourably circumstanced as he was, a work which has become classical, and in which all the questions, stated with perfect clearness, are solved, on the side of freedom, by common-sense, with irrefutable logic. These famous letters, seven in number, are dated, the first from Limoges, October 30th, the second from Tulle, November 8th, the third from Egleton, November 10th, the fourth from Egleton, November 11th, and from Bort, November 13th, the fifth from Saint-Angel, November 15th, the sixth from Angoulême, November 27th, the seventh, and last, from Limoges, December 7th, 1770. Three letters have, unfortunately, been lost; they were given to Louis XVI by Turgot himself in the original at the time of the *guerre des farines*, and they have not been recovered; the first drafts have disappeared, and nothing has remained of them but summaries and fragments; the others are complete.

The Abbé Terray, *contrôleur général*, meeting Turgot at Compiègne, had expressed to him, a few months before, his doubts on the advantages of freedom in the circulation of corn. "Three classes of persons," he said, "are interested in the selection of a system on the police of cereals: the landowners, the cultivators, and the consumers. I agree that the system of freedom is extremely favourable to the landowners. With respect to cultivators, the advantage they find in it is merely transient, because at the end of the lease the landowners know full well how to appropriate it by raising the rent. Finally, the

consumers evidently suffer the greatest prejudice from the liberty which raises the prices to an extent thoroughly out of proportion with their means of subsistence, and increasing all their expenses." Hence the Abbé Terray's conclusion that whereas freedom was advantageous only to the smallest proportion of the citizens, and a matter of indifference to the cultivators, it affected in the most serious manner the infinitely greater number of his majesty's subjects.

This series of arguments Turgot undertook to refute in his letters. In the first place he regards it as an error to believe that freedom of commerce can result in raising the average price of corn; the reverse is the truth. He has no difficulty in proving that if the cultivators and landowners can freely dispose of their crops only if they are compelled to sell cheap, whilst they lose on the quantity without being able to compensate for the scarcity of production by the raising of the prices, they are naturally led to prefer other cultures to that which exposes them to so many persecutions. A system of interference in commercial transactions must infallibly lead to diminish the importance of the crops, which necessarily produces a rise in the average price of corn. Under the *régime* of police regulations the prices are more variable; under the *régime* of freedom they are less so. "Regulations and prohibitions," says Turgot, "do not produce one more grain of corn, but they prevent the corn, over-abundant in one locality, from being carried to places where it is most scarce."

Turgot examines then what he calls the three branches of the Abbé Terray's opinions.

He states, in the first place, that he agrees with him so far that the landlords are interested in freedom, but not at all for the motive, as the *contrôleur général* believes, that freedom leads to a rise in the prices, since it is the contrary which is true. One of the consequences of the want of freedom is that in good years cultivators dare not warehouse the overplus of their crops for fear of being prosecuted as hoarders in a season of scarcity. So it happens that when plenty occurs the corn is wasted; it is thrown away to the cattle; hence a diminution in the production, and consequently a decrease in the net produce and in the annual value of the land.

In one of the three letters which have not been recovered, because they were lost with the papers of Louis XVI, Turgot had made a comparative and detailed statement of the expense entailed by production, and of the average value of the *setier* (twelve bushels in English value) of corn, in France, in the good, fair, and bad years, and he had calculated that where freedom of commerce does not exist, the impossibility of compensating one by another the expenses and the prices in times of plenty and in times of scarcity represented a diminution of 50,000,000 livres for landowners merely, to say nothing of the losses endured by workmen and consumers.

In his sixth letter Turgot passes on to what he calls the second branch of the Abbé Terray's argument, that is to say, the cultivators' point of view. The *contrôleur*

*général* looked upon the interest of the cultivator as being untouched, because in the case where the farmers would have found an advantage, their landlords would have reaped that advantage at the expiration of the leases. But the Abbé Terray forgot that cultivation on a large scale, that of farmers, occupied then, as it does now, only part of the territory of France. Four-sevenths of the country were worked by *métayers*, whose cultivation, resources, and income were very middling. These cultivators held no leases; they received half the produce. Under such circumstances the interest of the cultivator could not differ from that of the landowner, and freedom of commerce, which, according to the Abbé Terray's idea, ought to help the one, must be likewise beneficial to the other. Turgot hoped that the improvement in their situation would allow the wretched *métayers* of his day to shake off their misery gradually, to get together by degrees a small stock of cattle, and to become farmers, that is to say, to pay to their landlords a fixed rent.

This transformation would have had, according to him, the consequence of placing on the same level the cultivation of the provinces the most behindhand with that of the richest parts of Normandy, Picardy, and Ile de France. "And supposing," says he, "that the system of freedom had no advantage except that of putting on the same footing the culture of these provinces and that of the districts now cultivated on a large scale: supposing the cultivation and the income of these were not likewise to be very much increased, could you be blind to the

advantage which such a revolution alone would introduce into the State, the immense increase in the revenue and in articles of subsistence, could you not see what cultivation in general gains by a system of freedom ?"

Turgot devoted his last letter to the discussing of the interests of consumers, which, according to Terray, were injured by the suppression of the restrictions imposed under the *régime* of the old police; he reproduced and developed in that letter all the arguments he had already put forth to prove that freedom, by increasing the total mass of production, must tend to diminish the prices of the general market for the benefit of the consumers. We need not go a second time over these arguments, but his discussion of the monopoly of trade in corn exercised by the State is curious. What Terray wanted to favour by suppressing the edict of 1764 was really the *opérations des blés du roi*, to use the parlance of the times, and, when bringing light to bear upon the question of monopoly, Turgot touched the vital point. He could not conceive a company exercising the most terrible monopoly—monopoly on purchase against the labourer, monopoly on sale against the consumer. Supposing even that all its members were angels, the company could not possibly succeed in equalising the prices; it would be incapable of providing for the subsistence of all, and people would always say that it only consisted of rogues. "If a series of losses," says he, "is occasioned by a series of bad crops, and more certainly still by maladministration, by the faults, negligences, and swind-

ling of every kind inseparable from the management of an undertaking too extensive and directed by too many persons, what will become of the supply it has pledged itself to make? The directors will be hung, but that will not give bread to the poor."

The Abbé Terray, however, would listen to nothing; he contented himself with sounding the praise of the letters he had received, and offering them as patterns to the other *intendants;* and he cancelled, by the edict of December 23, 1770, the principal dispositions of the edict of 1764. All persons wishing to trade in corn had to enter in the police-register their names, surnames, qualities, places of abode, warehouses, and deeds relating to their business, and they were obliged under the severest penalties to sell nothing except at the market-town.

"In twenty villages," says Voltaire, "the lords, clergymen, labourers, and artisans were compelled either to go themselves or to send at a great expense to that capital (the market-town); anyone selling at home, to his neighbour, a *setier* of corn was condemned to a fine of 500 livres, and the corn, the waggon, and the horses were seized for the benefit of those who came to exercise that plunder accompanied by a troop of soldiers (*avec une bandolière*). Every lord giving in his village corn or oats to one of his vassals exposed himself to be punished as a criminal."

In order that so gross an abuse of power should come to an end, Turgot must be raised to the position of a cabinet minister.

## CHAPTER V.

### TURGOT A CABINET MINISTER.—FREE TRADE IN CORN.—THE GUERRE DES FARINES.—REINSTATEMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTS.

ON ascending the throne, Louis XVI had summoned the old Comte de Maurepas in order to make of him his prime minister. By this measure he had put an end to the triumvirate of d'Aiguillon, Maupeou, and Terray, but he had dismissed d'Aiguillon alone, and retained the two others temporarily. However, if Terray still retained his title as *contrôleur général*, we may say that his successor was already found; that was Turgot. The Abbé de Very and the Duchess d'Enville had decided that choice.

Very was an old fellow-pupil of Turgot, and had never ceased being with him on terms of the closest intimacy. Later on, at Bourges, where he had spent a few years as *grand vicaire*, he had made the acquaintance of the Count and Countess de Maurepas, exiled from the court by Louis XV, and he had often spoken to them of his friend. The countess admired Turgot's character, and had been won over by his ideas. Accordingly, when her husband had been made prime minister, she

strongly urged upon him to offer a seat in the cabinet to a man whose genius and honesty had inspired her with profound esteem.

The Duchess d'Enville belonged heart and soul to the philosophers and the economists, whom she received in her beautiful *château* of La Roche-Guyon. She was an impassioned advocate of free trade in corn, and was spared neither by the satires, nor by the songs, nor even by the caricatures with which the courtiers and the gentlemen of the parliament continually overwhelmed the new reformers. She belonged to the La Rochefoucauld family, with which Count de Maurepas was very proud of being connected. She recommended Turgot to him most strongly at the very time when the Countess de Maurepas and Very were recommending him likewise.

Thus it is that Turgot became minister, not called, perhaps, by public opinion, as it has been said, because public opinion did not exist then, or was only just beginning to appear; but he was designated by his admirers and friends to an all-powerful prime minister.

This event caused great joy in the camp of the economists and the *Encyclopédistes;* but a rather serious disappointment afterwards manifested itself when they learnt that, if Turgot was indeed minister, it was to the navy, and not to the finances, that he had been appointed.

"This selection meets with general approval," Mercy writes to Maria Theresa, "not because Turgot is supposed

to possess great talent for naval matters, but everyone knows that he is thoroughly honest." Marie Antoinette was not dissatisfied, and said to her mother that "Turgot enjoys the reputation of a very honest man."

The navy, besides, was only a temporary appointment. One month later, August 24th, 1774, Turgot was named *contrôleur général.* Whilst thanking the king, Turgot was very much moved. Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse relates that he said to him: "It is not to the king that I give myself up, but to the honest man," and that the king answered, taking him by both hands, "You will not have been mistaken."

The Abbé de Very gives of that scene a similar description. Turgot was with him at Compiègne, where the whole court had assembled, when Maurepas came to inform him of his appointment to the *contrôle général.* He went immediately to the king, and, on his return, this is how he related to Very the conversation he had just had with Louis XVI: "Sire," said he, "you must allow me to put down in writing my general views, and if I may so say, my conditions on the manner in which you should assist me in this administration of the finances; for, I own to you, it makes me tremble on account of the superficial acquaintance I have with it." "Yes! yes!" the king is reported to have said, "just as you please; but I give you my word of honour beforehand," and he took hold of both his hands whilst he went on speaking, "to share all your views, and always support you in the courageous steps you will have to take."

On the next day Turgot delivered to the king his famous programme. "I limit myself just now, Sire, to remind you of these three expressions: No bankruptcy, no increase in the taxes, no loans. No bankruptcy, either avowed or concealed by compulsory reduction. No increase in the taxes: the reason of this lies in the situation of your people, and still more in the heart of your Majesty. No loans, because every loan always diminishes the available income; it necessitates, besides, at the end of some time, either bankruptcy or an increase in the taxes."

To carry out this programme he only proposed one means, the reducing of the expenditure, and the bringing of its amount below that of the receipts. He knows perfectly well that all those who have expenses to carry on in the various branches of the public service will ever maintain that all those expenses are indispensable, and he feels no doubt that they will support their statement by excellent arguments; but he knows also that all their statements should yield to the absolute necessity of economy. He represents strongly to the king that the people can be relieved only through the reform of abuses, which is difficult, because there are always many people interested in keeping up abuses, "for there is no abuse which does not maintain some person or other. . . ." "I shall have to fight," said he, "against your Majesty's natural kindness and generosity, and against that of the persons dearest to you. . . . Your Majesty will be pleased to remember that I abandon

myself less to the king, than to you individually, to the honest man, to the man just and good."

Turgot evidently dreaded the influence of the queen. I have read the very draft of the programme. After having written the words, "against your Majesty's generosity," Turgot had already added the words, "and of the . . ." when he stopped and covered the "and of the" by "and against that of the persons, etc."

On the very next day Turgot set to work. Named *contrôleur général*, August 24th, 1774, he was to be dismissed May 18th, 1776, at the end of twenty months and eighteen days. Out of these twenty months he enjoyed good health during thirteen, and suffered from gout during the seven others; but illness did not influence his work, and we can affirm that during the whole time that he exercised his duties as *contrôleur général* he never ceased for one single instant the frank and honest execution of what we can designate his *programme*, to use a modern expression, that is to say, the re-establishment of the finances, the struggle against the abuses, the destruction of privileges, freedom of work, commerce, and industry, which had been crushed by regulations and monopolies, endeavouring thus to realise without violence, fifteen years before the Revolution of 1789, all the reforms conquered later on in the civil and economic order, at the cost of so many efforts and sufferings.

He was implacable for persons who stood up for abuses in order to live upon them, whenever he thought these persons intelligent enough to appreciate their own

acts; but he was indulgent for the ignorant, vigorously stamping out at the same time the disorders into which their ignorance might hurry them. He had a due regard, besides, for vested rights, and he always took care to pay equitably the amount of the offices which he decided upon suppressing. His accession to the *contrôle général* had frightened the farmers-general. "People say that the financiers are frightened to death," the Abbé Baudeau wrote; "they are wrong; M. Turgot is not giddy enough to upset immediately the lease of the farming of the taxes, or the other financial arrangements."

During the discussion which he had in 1776 with Miroménil on the suppression of the *corvées* (statute-labour) he penned some notes in answer to the observations of the keeper of the seals. In those notes a passage occurred well worth the attention of those who used to consider, or who still consider Turgot as the chief of a band of fanatics. "I know quite as well as anybody else that we should not always do the best thing possible, and that, if we cannot give up the idea of correcting by degrees the defects of an old constitution, we must proceed only slowly, in proportion as public opinion and the course of events render the alterations possible."

With the view of convincing public opinion, and destroying prejudices which he considered as founded upon ignorance, he had conceived the plan of a board which would have formed an administration analogous to our Ministry of Public Instruction.

"I think," said he to the king, "that I cannot propose to your Majesty anything more advantageous for your people, and more likely to maintain peace and good order, better qualified to give activity to all useful works, to make your authority cherished, and to attach more and more to yourself the hearts of your subjects, than to have them all thoroughly instructed in the obligations they have towards society, and towards your power which protects society: the duties which these obligations lay upon them, the interest they have in fulfilling these duties for the public good and for their own. This moral and social training requires books expressly written by competition, and a schoolmaster in every parish who shall teach them to the children, together with writing, ciphering, and land-measurement . . . . The civic education given throughout the whole extent of the kingdom under the direction of the educational board, together with the common-sense books it would order to be written, and from which it would compel every professor to teach, would contribute still more to train a well-informed and virtuous people."

Whilst preoccupied with the thought of destroying prejudices for the future, and moulding, as he was wont to say, a new nation, Turgot attended quite as eagerly to the present, and sought the promptest and most efficacious means of healing the inveterate wound of financial disorder, rendered worse still by the Abbé Terray's dishonest administration.

He had been scarcely installed in the office of *contrôleur*

*général* than he commissioned those of his assistants in whom he had the greatest confidence to collect the elements of what we should now call the budget of income and of expenditure.

"He ordered," says Dupont de Nemours, "the drawing up of methodical and minute tables which should contain the most complete details on every branch of the income and the expenditure." This statement has been preserved.

We have also a statement of the same kind made by his predecessor a few days before. The Abbé Terray, whom Louis XVI had retained for a few months in the ministry, had hoped that he might remain there permanently, by setting his system of policy in tune with the new reign, and by transforming his principles, since new principles seemed fashionable. In the memoir and the statement to which we alluded, he cast upon d'Aiguillon and de Boynes, respectively Ministers of War and of the Navy, the responsibility of the deficit, and laid a great stress on the efforts he had made to reduce the expenditure by every possible means. Weber states that in the conversations he had with his friend, the *abbé* said that "he had succeeded by dint of injustices, bankruptcies, and spoliations in filling the deficit, all but five millions. He had left 57,000,000 in the treasury, besides 14,000,000 in reserve for unforeseen requirements. The anticipations were reduced to two months. He had provided for the usual expenses, war preparations, the circumstance

of three weddings, and other extraordinary outlays which were to remain secret."

Turgot's adversaries have contrasted the situation of the treasury at the two epochs of Terray's downfall and of Turgot's; and they have pretended that Turgot exhausted the reserve left by his predecessor. Linguet used to say of Terray that he was a Sully, because he had amassed an amount of 56,000,000. Turgot, according to him, could be compared only to Sully's successors, who had squandered away the millions heaped up in the Bastille. We shall follow neither the discussion of Terray's supporters nor the arguments of Turgot's champions, for both would be equally idle; posterity has pronounced its verdict; it has selected between the unscrupulous minister of Louis XV and the honest minister of Louis XVI.

## I.

One of Turgot's first measures had been to dismiss the *maître des requêtes*, Brochet de Saint-Prest, director of the corn agency. "I am delighted," wrote Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse, "that M. Turgot has already dismissed the man of the corn business."

We must remember that in 1770, that is to say, four years previously, Terray had suppressed the liberal clauses of the declaration of 1763, and the edict of 1764 on the trade in corn, and that he had once again brought that trade under the severity of the old police regulations. By the return to the former usages he had flattered the

prejudices of the people and the parliaments, and satisfied the publicists, who contended that the national subsistence could not be abandoned to what they called the unfettered cupidity of commercial people. He had found, besides, a valuable support for the upholding of his political views in the book of a man of considerable wit, an intimate friend of *littérateurs* and *Encyclopédistes*, whose ideas on questions of economy, not very liberal, contrasted singularly with the opinions of most of his friends.

The Abbé Galiani, for it is to him that we allude, had composed a series of dialogues on free trade in corn, and in these dialogues, full of sharpness, of wit, and of examples borrowed from the history of all nations, he had affirmed that so far as commerce in cereals is concerned, policy could be only one arising from circumstances; it must be different according to the various countries, and in the same country it could not be the same in the interior and on the sea-coast.

The Abbé Terray did not disdain the help brought to him by the Abbé Galiani, but he cared very little about his arguments. It was really neither the cries of the people, nor the wishes expressed by the parliaments, nor Galiani's theories, which were to decide him to cancel the edict of 1764. He yielded to none of the arguments of those who reasoned in conformity with his own views, just as he neglected the advices sent to him by Turgot from Limousin, in the seven admirable letters which we have analysed above.

The aim he pursued was none else but the establishment of a monopoly in the corn trade—monopoly handed over to his underlings, his associates, and perhaps, as it has often been stated, the associates of King Louis XV. According to the arrangement which has been designated by the too startling expression of *le pacte de famine*, the great point was to realise at any rate the monopoly of speculation on the article of consumption of prominent necessity *par excellence*, the bread of the people.

Much has been written on the *pacte de famine;* it is an incident, the importance of which has been much exaggerated by popular report; but it remains beyond doubt that dealings in corn which have been the result of it were accompained by thefts, criminal dilapidations, and disgraceful speculations which we are right in denouncing and condemning, although no historian has ever been able to draw up an exact list of them, or to give the enumeration of the persons who made their fortune by them, or derived from them some profit.

A lawyer, a man of business, named Leprévost de Beaumont, had been informed of the agreement made for the establishing of a society by a retired Paris baker, Malisset, inventor of an improved system for the grinding of corn, and a certain number of capitalists. The object of that society was the execution of a treaty entered upon with the government for "the care, the providing, and the preservation of the king's cereals."

This was in 1765, and the agreement which must now be executed anticipated a permanent supply. The corn or the flour produced by it was to be constantly maintained in a good state of preservation, and with that view the society for the farming of the cereals was authorised to sell the old purchases and replace them by new ones, according to the fluctuation of the market, a circumstance which excused, sanctioned, and encouraged speculation. Leprévost de Beaumont saw in that agreement a compact made with the view of starving the people—*le pacte de famine:* he wanted to denounce it, but, overtaken before he could give to the Rouen parliament a copy of it which he had prepared, he was arrested and sent to the Bastille, from which he came out only on the 14th of July, 1789. The Revolution it was which set him free. "It is not," said he, "from suspicions, reports, conjectures, or false statements that I denounce this horrible machination; it is from the terms of its compact." And when Laverdy, the *contrôleur général* who had signed that deed in 1765, appeared on Brumaire 3rd, year II of the Republic, before the Revolutionary tribunal, Leprévost came to support, spontaneously, Fouquier-Tinville's accusation. All those, however, who had formed part of that society, who had concurred towards that so-called *pacte de famine*, and whom Leprévost de Beaumont had reproached for having gained, as he said, "tens of millions, by hundreds at a time," had successively died, either ruined or in a state of insolvency; and Malisset himself, the agent-

general of the company, still alive in 1791, vegetated without any resources, and as if out of his mind.

Leprévost de Beaumont's accusations were evidently exaggerated. It is possible that the corn company gave shares of interests on its profits to influential personages, to the king's favourites both male and female, perhaps to the king himself; proof has been found that such was the case for the shares in the profits of the general farming of the taxes. It is not less clear that certain of the society's agents speculated on their own account, and that a few clerks gave themselves up to dilapidations and thefts, of which the produce was squandered by them, and helped them to keep up an impudent opulence, little justified by their patrimonial fortune. But never has anyone been able to find the track of the tens of thousands of millions, which, if we believe Leprévost de Beaumont, were drawn by Malisset's accomplices from the people, so wretchedly poor, of the last years of Louis XV.

In consequence of Leprévost de Beaumont's revelations, whether from fear lest they should be made public, or from other reasons of public or private interests, the Malisset-agreement was quashed by the Abbé Terray himself. A new combination, that of the *régie intéressée*, had been invented as its substitute. That *régie* was to pursue the same aim as the previous farming, that is to say, it was to provide for the distribution of corn, so that the provinces the best supplied should give their overplus to the less favoured ones. "A commission had

been formed," so say the memoirs on Terray, "to inquire into the corn business. It had under its authority two directors or agents-general for the purchases and transmissions (Sorin de Bonne and Doumerc); so that all abuses, in this branch of the public service, ought to have been immediately suppressed. But the councillors of State complained that they were not consulted, that nothing was communicated to them, and, indeed, the Abbé Terray had always brought to them the work half-done; this conduct had become still more suspected, because Brochet de Saint-Prest, his sworn ally, a thorough beggar when he entered the council, displayed since he formed part of it an extraordinary amount of opulence and luxury; hence the supposition that MM. Terray and Brochet, far from checking the monopoly, favoured it and carried it on by their underlings, who, too, were extremely rich."

One month after Brochet de Saint-Prest's dismissal, September 18th, 1774, two fishermen found in the Seine, in the neighbourhood of Suresne, under a big stone, a bundle of papers referring to the administration of corn. Albert, the economist, the commercial *intendant*, the friend of Turgot, and who had been appointed in Brochet's stead, received the bundle discovered by the fishermen. He immediately caused the government seals to be placed on the papers of Sorin and Doumerc, ordering the two men to be locked up in the Bastille. Crushing proofs were found against Brochet and his wife, who had borrowed heavy sums from the exchequer of the admin-

istration, but the books of the administrators seemed regularly kept. Traces, indeed, were found of some misappropriations at which the *contrôleur général*—we mean Terray—had no doubt winked, but nothing resulted from the inquest which could justify a criminal pursuit. Albert set the two administrators at liberty, declaring that it was merely the case of settling of accounts to be brought before the ordinary and duly qualified tribunals. As for the irregular profits realised in private speculations, they could not but escape all investigations: it was impossible to procure a statement of them. After so many scandals, so many rumours and reports, there was only one resolution to adopt: return to freedom in the corn trade, and break up all these companies, all these administrations, which, "if they had consisted even of angels," as Turgot said in 1770, could not escape the suspicion and the anger of the people. The *contrôleur général*, accordingly, resolved upon suppressing the legislation extemporised by Terray in 1770, and he did well. He returned to the freedom, still very limited, of the declaration of 1763 and of the edict of 1764, the initiative of which had been formerly taken by the *contrôleur général* Bertin, Turgot's colleague in the 1774 cabinet.

The decree on the freedom of the corn trade was signed in the Council of Finances, September 13th, 1776; but it was published only on the 20th of the same month. As early as September 7th, Baudeau announced in his journal that "the declaration of May 25th, 1763,

on the liberty of home trade is about to be re-established by an edict of the council blotting out all the Abbé Terray's scribbling"; but on the 18th he was still ignorant that the decision had been taken, and he said: "There are some fine contradictory rumours on the forthcoming edict of the council which relates to the corn trade. Some say that it is a continuation of the old principles, or, at the utmost, the replacing of one company by another. The provision dealers (*approvissionneurs*), Sorin and Doumerc, boast of going on with their swindling."

The truth is that, during the week after Turgot's proposition, there had been a discussion at the council-board. Bertin, who during his tenure of office as *contrôleur général* had caused the liberal declaration of 1763 and the 1764 edict to be produced, was now Minister of Agriculture; and, whilst sharing Turgot's opinions, he was afraid of coming too strongly into collision with popular prejudices. He was convinced that in the corn question there was only one measure sanctioned by experience, viz., "progress by slow and successive steps." In September, 1774, probably between the 13th and the 20th, after the first communication of the scheme of edict to the Council of Finances, and before it had been made public, he wrote to Turgot: "The documents you have forwarded to me, whilst they revive all my hopes for the general good, and for that of my special office, have renewed all my regrets as to the past . . . . I exhort you to give to your progress all the

slowness of prudence. I would even go so far as to invite you, if it was as possible for you as it is to me to do so, and if you had not long ago made a profession of your principles, to conceal your views and your opinions from the child whom you have to govern and to restore to health. You cannot help performing here the part of a dentist."

Bertin was not the only person who recommended him prudence. Others came who wished to turn him aside from the object he had in view. They were no doubt less devoted to him individually; that was perhaps the reason why Turgot repelled them with a certain degree of haughtiness. Necker, who had just been crowned by the Académie Française for his *éloge* of Colbert, asked of him an audience, with the view of explaining to him his ideas on the corn question. This is how Morellet, in his memoirs, relates this incident: "M. Turgot answered rather dryly to the author, in a personal interview, that he might print whatever he liked; he, Turgot, dreaded nothing; the public would judge; he refused to see the work; he stated all this with that contemptuous manner which he put on too frequently when he refuted ideas contrary to his own; and what I state now I do not express from hearsay, for I saw it with my own eyes, and heard it with my own ears, for I was then at M. Turgot's. M. Necker came there, bringing with him his MS.; I heard the answer made to his proposition; and I saw him retire with the appearance of a man who was offended, and yet not discouraged."

Just like the minister of whom Madame de Boufflers used to say: "His is a coldness which freezes you."

Necker sent his MS. to the press, and published it at the time of the disturbances; he caused a copy to be delivered to Turgot, who acknowledged it by the following laconic and cutting reply bearing date April 23, 1775: "I have received, sir, the copy of your work which you have caused to be left at my door; I thank you for your attention. If I had had to write on the subject, and had thought proper to defend the opinion which you maintain, I would have waited for a more quiet moment, when the question might have interested only people in a state to judge it dispassionately. But on this point, as on many others, each one has his way of thinking. I am, sir, very truly yours, etc., etc."

Necker's answer was soon despatched. He modestly founds his justification on the very date of the *imprimatur*, date which was anterior, not only to the disturbances, but even to all rise in the price of corn.

"Then," says he, "there was not the slightest dearness anywhere. If the rise which has since come about in several places, had seemed to you, sir, or to the keeper of the seals, a motive for delaying the publication of the book, and if you had informed me of your opinion, I would have respectfully complied with your wishes . . . It is sufficiently annoying for me to differ from your way of thinking on some points of political economy; I would wish you to have no other subject of complaint against me. I would really value your opinion on this subject."

Necker's book obtained an immense success. A large number of editions of it were successively published. Turgot's adversaries, the parliamentaries, the administrators belonging to Colbert's school, praised it to the skies. The champions of the protectionist system have made of it, and can still make of it at the present day, their manual; nor do they fail to do so, deriving from the work on the legislation and the trade in corn arguments the value of which increases by reason of the honesty of him who has supplied them with these arguments. There exists another school, however, connected with the doctrines of certain adversaries of Turgot, which professes for Necker's book quite as passionate an admiration: it is the socialist school of the organisation of labour. "Then Necker took up his pen," Louis Blanc writes in his "History of the French Revolution," "and out of a subject which Galiani believed he had exhausted he produced a powerful book, a book where from end to end reigned a grave eloquence, a subdued emotion, and certain pages of which might have been owned equally by a statesman and by a poet. Seeking in the question of corn merely an opportunity of attacking, for the benefit of the people, the system of individualism, and going back to the principles constitutive of society, Necker submitted them to an inquiry equally elevated and audacious."

In the edition which he has given of the *Legislation sur le commerce des grains*, M. de Molinari passes upon it a judgment very opposite, judgment which may be

thought severe, but which liberals cannot denounce as such. He discovers in the book "great order and method, a certain warmth of style, but a complete absence of principles, and a childish ignorance of facts. The author proceeds by hypotheses, and these hypotheses are generally wrong. M. Necker's book has contributed more than any other to lead opinion astray on the important question of articles of subsistence."

The edict of Tuesday, September 13th, 1774, brought once more before the council at its sitting of the following Tuesday, September 20th, was published at last. It created profound joy amongst all the minister's friends. What had struck them from the very first, and what, we may say, commanded the approval of all men of an elevated turn of mind, was the care taken by Turgot to explain, in a lengthened preamble, the reasons of the change introduced by the new decree to the then existing legislation. To discuss before the public was a novelty at the time; Turgot thus invented the system, generally practised since in free governments, of introducing legislative enactments *(projets de lois)* by what we now designate as *exposés des motifs.*

Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse writes to M. de Guibert: "Within a few days will be published an edict on the trade in corn; it will be justified by a preliminary statement (*motivé*); this expression is a new one." Condorcet says, on his side: "He set the useful example of giving to the public a detailed and reasoned account of the principles according to which the laws were drawn up."

La Harpe writes: "He is the first amongst us who transformed the acts of the sovereign into a work of argument and of persuasion." Nor does Voltaire spare his praise for the novelty in the form: "Never yet had edicts been seen in which the sovereign condescended to instruct his subjects, reason with them, enlighten them as to their interests, persuade them before commanding them; the substance of almost all the orders emanating from the throne was contained in the words, 'for such is our good will and pleasure' (*car tel est notre bon plaisir*)."

The preamble of the decree of September 13th is really a discussion of principles, in which Turgot endeavours to prove, and succeeds in doing so, that free trade in corn secures the subsistence of nations more completely and under better conditions than police regulations.

It is in some sort a fresh explanation of the doctrines so well defended a few years before in the seven letters on cereals addressed to the Abbé Terray, and of which we have given the substance.

"The more commerce is free, brisk, extended," says that admirable statement, "the more promptly, efficaciously, and abundantly is the people provided for. The prices are proportionately more uniform; they vary proportionately less from the average and usual price according to which salaries are necessarily fixed. Victualling made by the care of the government cannot have the same success. The attention of the State, divided between too many objects, cannot be as active as that of merchants who are

exclusively occupied with their trade. It knows later and less correctly both needs and resources. The agents employed by the government, having no interest in economy, buy at a dearer market, convey the provisions at a greater cost, and preserve them with smaller precautions. A large amount of corn is lost and damaged. Through want of skill, or even through dishonesty, these agents may increase to excess the cost attending their operations. They may indulge in criminal intrigues unknown to the government. Even when they are most innocent, they cannot avoid being suspected of fraud, and the suspicion always reflects upon the administration which employs them, and which becomes hateful to the people through the very care it takes in supplying them with food."

"No minister," says Métra's correspondence, "without excepting Sully, Colbert, d'Argenson, has ever made our masters utter a nobler and kinder language."

Baudeau writes in his journal: "It (the edict) is received with great applause by the public. Good Turgot's enemies are somewhat silly at the turn which this edict has taken, and at the wisdom of the principles which he explains in the clearest manner."

Voltaire writes to D'Alembert: "I have just read M. Turgot's masterpiece. It seems as if new heavens and a new earth had made their appearance."

Unfortunately, circumstances became more and more difficult. The harvest had been middling in 1774, and seemed as if it would be almost null in 1775. Bachaumont said, in his *Mémoires secrets:* "The *contrôleur général*, per-

sisting in his system of free trade in corn, is not affected by the rise in price, which takes place everywhere. He assures us that it will not exceed the pitch it had attained at the time of the monopoly; the calamity, he adds, will only be temporary, and the speculators, punished for their cupidity, will lose for ever the desire of hoarding their provisions of corn."

On the 18th of April, 1775, a troop of peasants invaded Dijon, plundering private houses, destroying mills, and searching all the places where an amount of corn was supposed to exist. The governor was threatened with death, being accused of having said: "My friends, the grass is beginning to grow, go and browse." The bishop went into the streets, harangued the peasants, and finally prevailed upon them to leave the town. People have tried to discover, at the time of that riot, and even since, what was the cause of a movement so sudden and so speedily suppressed. Was it a mere popular outbreak, such as is sometimes seen when whole populations suffer? It is quite certain that those who took part in the Dijon riots had not read Turgot's *exposé des motifs*, and understood nothing of his serious and lofty discussion on the principles of free trade. The riot was therefore provoked neither by the perusal of the edict, nor by that of the preliminary remarks. It is related that Turgot, communicating this preamble to one of his friends, said to him, laughing: "It will be found diffuse and flat; this is my motive: I wished to make it so clear that every village magistrate might make the peasants

understand it. It is a subject on which public opinion can exercise great influence." Popular opinion could certainly do much in an evil direction; but village judges had not yet been able to prepare it for good, by giving to the peasants the lessons mentioned by Turgot; they were far from having dissipated prejudices which last sometimes for several centuries when all enlightened men have succeeded in throwing them off.

It is always easy to explain a popular rising by a plot, just as it is easy to explain the phenomena of nature, when they produce themselves, by the special interference of a superior and occult power. We judge thus in most cases from extreme shortsightedness, and we should not be too easily satisfied with explanations of that kind. However, events occurred at Dijon, as they did later on at Pontoise, Versailles, and Paris, which it is difficult to account for, if we do not suppose the action of a directing club, and of chiefs more or less disguised, whose aim it was to excite popular wrath and to promote the attacks of the rioters.

"The first point of my sermon," Voltaire writes to Condorcet, "is the abominable popular superstition which rises against free trade in corn, and free trade of any kind. You see the horrors which have just been perpetrated at Dijon. God grant that the fetishes may not have excited underhand this small copy of Saint Bartholomew's Day"; and in another letter, written one month later to Madame de Saint-Julien: "If you had been at Dijon, you would have stopped the criminal

riot excited in an underhand manner by M. Turgot's enemies."

Turgot replied to the Dijon disturbances, not by making a concession to the champions of police regulations, but by giving new pledges to free trade, which was more in accordance with his views, at Dijon itself, and likewise at Beaune, Saint-Jean de Losne, and at Montbard. He tried to meet high prices with a diminution in the taxes. In a decree of the council, dated April 22nd, 1775, that is to say, four days after the insurrection, and at the very moment when he was informed of it at Paris, he said: "The king, occupied by the means of preventing the corn necessary for the sustenance of his people from rising above the equitable and natural value it ought to have, consistent with the inconstancy of the seasons and the state of the harvest, has established, by his decree of September 13th, 1774, and by his letters patent of November 2nd last, freedom in trade, which alone can by its activity supply corn to the districts where need might be felt, and stop by competition all excessive rise in prices. . . . Consequently, the levying of all duties on corn and flour, at the entrance of towns as well as in markets, either under the title of municipal dues (*octrois*), or under the domination of *minage*, *aunage*, *hallage*, or any others, is suspended in the towns of Dijon, Saint-Jean de Losne, and Montbard."

The rise in the price of corn persisted, nevertheless, and all those whose private interests had suffered from the destruction of monopoly did not cease accusing the

*contrôleur général* of witnessing with indifference the sufferings of the people. And yet Turgot was very far from entertaining that indifference; and, as formerly during the period of his *intendance* at Limoges, he endeavoured to relieve, by the establishment of charitable workshops, those who were unable to provide for their wants.

He caused to be distributed among the Paris *curés* a memoir on the means of procuring by additional work resources for the population of the metropolis, in case a fresh rise should take place in the prices of provisions; he addressed to all the provincial *intendants* directions for the creation and administration of charitable workshops in the rural districts. These two documents are respectively dated May 1st and 2nd, 1775. The very day when they were published, the *guerre des farines* broke out.

## II.

Bands had gathered together in the country. They appeared first at Pontoise, not far from the estates of the Prince de Conti, plundering, burning the houses, begging for bread, and destroying the corn, exciting the people to seize upon the corn-barges, as at Méry-sur-Oise, and to divide between themselves the contents of those barges; to penetrate into the towns with the view of upsetting the markets. The Chevalier Turgot, brother of the minister, relating afterwards to Soulavie the events of May, 1775, said to him that "the plunderers seemed to have gold and

silver about them; their movements were directed as an insurrectional operation, and according to the best principles of military art, no doubt under the command of an experienced general."

On the 2nd of May, 1775, the mob went to Versailles, they penetrated as far as the palace, filled the courtyard, clamouring for bread. Turgot was then in Paris, where he had gone to hold a conference with the lieutenant of police and Marshal Biron. The king appeared at the balcony, wished to speak, but was not listened to. The rumour spread that he had yielded to the urgent advice of his *entourage*, and that he had promised to impose a duty of two sous (one penny) on bread. The correspondence of the king with Turgot, preserved amongst the Lantheuil records by Marquis Turgot, contradicts this opinion most decidedly. On the 2nd of May, 1775, Louis XVI wrote indeed two letters to Turgot; the former is dated 11 o'clock in the morning; the latter, two o'clock in the afternoon. Here is the text of both:

"May 2, 1775, 11 o'clock in the morning.

"I have just received your letter, sir, by M. de Beauveau. Versailles is attacked, and by the same people who went to Saint-Germain. I shall settle with Marshal de Muy and M. d'Affry as to what is to be done; you may rely on my firmness. I have just despatched the guards to the market-place; I am very satisfied with the precautions you have taken for Paris,

where I most feared lest disorders should break out; you may tell M. Bertier that I approve his conduct; you will do well to put under arrest the persons you mention; but especially, when you have secured them, let there be no hurry, but plenty of questions. I have just given orders for what is to be done here, and for the markets and mills of the neighbourhood. "LOUIS."

Three hours afterwards, a fresh letter:

"Two o'clock, Tuesday, May 2nd.

"I have just seen M. Bertier, sir; I have been very satisfied with the arrangements taken by him with respect to the Oise and the Lower Seine; he gave me an account of what took place at Gonesse, and of the encouragements he had given to the labourers and corndealers not to interrupt the trade. I have sent orders to the Company of Noailles at Beauvais to arrange with him in case of need. He has just started for Mantes, where he will find at Meulan the light cavalry and the gendarmes, who are directed to arrange with him; he will, besides, find infantry in both towns. The musketeers are under orders to hold themselves in readiness at Paris, according to the need you may have of them; the *Black*, who are all quartered at the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, can send detachments in the direction of the Marne; and the *Grey*, in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, can forward some towards the Lower Seine. M. l'Intendant has told me that he entertains no fears for the Upper Seine and the Marne, which do not supply any flour; nevertheless

we shall despatch troops there. The colonel-general shall go to Montereau and to Melun, and Lorraine to Meaux. Here we are perfectly easy. The riot was beginning to assume serious proportions; the forces sent put a stop to it, and the rioters kept quiet before them. M. de Beauveau, who went there, asked them some questions; some answered that they came from Sartrouville and from Carrières Saint-Denis; the others said that they came from more than twenty villages; the greater part said that they had no bread, and that they had come to have some; they showed some very bad barley loaves for which they had paid two sous (one penny); that was the only bread they could procure. The greatest blunder committed was that the market had not been open; as soon as it was so, everything went on very well. The people bought and sold as if nothing had happened. They went off afterwards, and detachments of the body-guards followed them to know the direction they took. I do not believe the loss has been considerable. I have caused soldiers to be stationed on the road to Chartres, and on those leading to the mills of the Orsay and Chevreuse valleys; precautions are likewise taken for the Neauphle and Rambouillet markets. I trust that all the communications will be free, and that trade will go on regularly. I have recommended to M. l'Intendant to find out, if he can, those who paid; I look upon them as our best capture.

"I shall not go out to-day; not that I fear in the least, but I want everything to quiet down.

"M. de Beauveau interrupts me to inform me of a foolish step which has been taken, namely, allow the rioters to take bread at two sous. He pretends that there is no middle course between permitting them to take it thus, and compelling them under threats of the bayonet to buy it at the present prices. This market is over, but when the next occurs, the greatest precautions must be taken to prevent the rioters from coming to lay down their conditions. Let me know what had best be done, for the state of things is most perplexing.

"LOUIS."

Turgot returned to Versailles in the course of the evening; he immediately cancelled the order of M. de Beauveau, and prohibited the requiring of the merchants and bakers that they should sell corn or bread under market price.

The next day, May 3rd, the rioters entered Paris, and began plundering; "in some of the streets one might have fancied one's self in a town taken by storm." The police showed no energy, and allowed the men to have it their own way; it is even stated that they obliged several bakers to open their shops, and that the mutineers were at liberty to carry off bread without paying for it. Turgot, who was incessantly going from Versailles to Paris, and from Paris to Versailles, requested the council to meet during the night of the 3rd to the 4th of May, 1775. He spoke most energetically against Lenoir, the lieutenant of police, who had done nothing to stop the

riots, he obtained his dismissal, and caused immediately his friend Albert to be appointed in his place. The commander of the police (*guet*), both infantry and cavalry, was likewise dismissed, and Marshal Biron organised resistance as in the case of a real war. Two armies were raised at once; the one for Paris, under the orders of Biron; the other for the parts outside the metropolis, under the direction of one of his lieutenants. On the 4th, the rioters tried to recommence the plunder; but the attitude of the troops frightened them. They withdrew, and the Parisians, venturing out to find the riot, as they said, no longer discovered it.

During the day the parliament had assembled and caused an edict to be posted up forbidding the assembly of groups of idlers, but adding that the king should be asked to lower the price of bread. Turgot forthwith stopped the distribution of that edict, and directed the parliament's manifesto, posted up in divers places, to be covered by a proclamation forbidding, in the king's name, gatherings, under penalty of death. At the same time he caused an edict to be published assigning to the Tournelle the duty of trying the rioters. The Parliament met a second time to draw up a reply. They asserted that the last-named edict was an infringement of the rights of "superior police" (*haute police*), which had always been one of the prerogatives of the parliament. They issued a new decree, claiming the right of conducting the case, and praying once more the king to lower the price of the bread. Turgot at once ordered the

parliament to meet at Versailles, for the purpose of receiving the king's commands in a bed of justice.

The sitting was held on the morning of the 5th. As Turgot was not present, the king informed him by a note, dated 6 o'clock p.m., that everything had passed off quietly, and that the councillors "had toned down much of their impertinence." "I nearly lost my memory at the first speech," said the king, "but I made up for it as I could, without getting disconcerted." In this bed of justice the decree of the previous day was annulled, and the trying of the rioters was given to the *prévôts de la maréchaussée.*

The *commission prévôtale*, immediately called together, sent to the gallows two poor wretches, who ascended the gallows saying that they were dying for the people; a few fights took place in the country districts, and twenty-three peasants—so it is said—were killed in an engagement which occurred on the Versailles highroad.

At the same time, and to reassure the dealers in corn, Turgot reimbursed to them the amount of the goods they had lost. The *communes* were obliged to pay the damages caused by the rioters. A friend of the Marquis de Mirabeau, named Butré, wrote to Turgot, asking him to be exonerated from the tax to which his property had been assessed in consequence of the riots. Turgot thus answered him: "As for the compensation you have to pay for reparation of the damages suffered by the corn, I acknowledge that it is disagreeable for you, as it is for many others who certainly have taken no part in the

rioting; but you must feel that if the general distribution of these kinds of compensation is an evil for the innocent persons upon whom it falls, it is nevertheless indispensable in order to establish the confidence of traders against popular outbreaks, and to interest the whole of the country in preventing and opposing them."

This was a great victory for Turgot. The king had supported him with firmness. "You are quite right in saying," thus Louis XVI wrote on May 6th, "that all this will cost a great deal of money and necessitate great retrenchments; but whether a little more or a little less, we must have passed through this crisis, and as, sometimes, evil leads to good, people will have seen from this affair that I am not so weak as was supposed, and that I shall know how to carry on what I have resolved to do; this will render easier the operations we may have to perform; the fact is that I am more embarrassed with one man than with fifty."

Turgot, then, enjoyed at that time the king's full confidence; he had triumphed not only over the riot, but also over the opposition of the parliament, the *esprit de Fronde* of the Parisians, the affected indifference of his colleagues. The Parisians had pretended that they had hunted about for the riot, and had not found it. When all was over, they made songs about it; the women wore caps *à la révolte*, and the name of *guerre des farines* was given for fun to this popular movement. Everyone believed in a plot. In his instructions and decrees, Turgot makes the king expressly say so. "The

destruction," he writes, "was committed by men foreign to the parishes which they came to plunder. . . . It seems as though the purpose of this plot was to create a real famine in the provinces around Paris, and in Paris itself, in order to drive the people to the last excesses through want and despair." (Instructions sent by his Majesty's orders to all the *curés* of his kingdom, May 9th, 1775.) Writing to the king of Sweden on the 15th of July following, Louis XVI said: "The bad harvest, and the evil disposition of certain persons whose schemes were concerted, have led some rogues to plunder certain markets." Maria Theresa, answering to Marie Antoinette, remarked: "I believe, as you do, that there is something under all this." Many persons were accused of having taken a part in this plot. Some said it was Sartine; Turgot believed that Conti was the instigator. "I would not dare to affirm that this rumour was without foundation," Marmontel writes in his memoirs.

The hope of the instigators of the riot was, however, very much deceived, for never did Turgot enjoy greater power with the king than during the days which followed the repression of the disturbances. The support given to him by Malesherbes in his *remontrances* of May 21st, 1775, and the accession of that great and good man to the ministry, confirmed his triumph. The queen herself, who was the secret stay of the Choiseul party, seemed disarmed, for a space of time, alas! too short.

## III.

But we must retrace our steps. In order not to interrupt the narrative of the corn-business from the re-establishment of free trade, September 13, 1774, to the *guerre des farines*, May 2-6, 1775, we have left aside for further discussion the greatest event connected with the beginning of the reign, we mean the reinstatement of the parliaments.

The Maupeou *coup d'état*, as it was then called, had created a profound sensation when it took place in 1771, and at the accession of Louis XVI that sensation was still lasting with the same intensity as on the first day. The suppression of the parliaments, and the cruel violences exercised against their members, had raised an opposition of feeling which kept up and further increased the formidable opposition of interest excited in the magistracy by the radical change which Maupeou had prepared.

The new sovereign was strongly urged to return to the old organisation of justice. Maupeou, besides, had not been able to steer clear of a rock on which revolutions most frequently make shipwreck in which the question of persons have a leading share. The substitutions, hurriedly made, left much to be desired; the new judges had less merit than the old ones. These sham-judges (*juges postiches*), as they were called, enjoyed, not unreasonably, no consideration. A kind of public opinion seemed therefore to force upon the government,

even independently of the society amidst which the parties concerned moved, the dismissal of the new judges and the recall of the former ones. Let us not make a mistake, however. The destruction of the old parliaments, and the establishment of a magistracy whose sole business would have been to administer justice without troubling itself with either government or politics, were the preliminary conditions of the civil, economic, and political reforms which might have prevented the violences of the close of the century, and allowed the French Revolution to accomplish its work by making gradually the principles of modern government succeed to those of the *ancien régime.* In an article on Louis XVI and Turgot (*Correspondant*, August 1868), M. de Larcy considers the recall of the parliaments as the first step taken in the direction of a political system which, according to him, could find its issue only in danger.

Turgot was opposed to the recall, and, so far, was in agreement with all his colleagues, except Maurepas. "It is stated," says the Métra correspondence, "that the king has been obliged to take upon himself the whole responsibility of the business, and even to use his authority for this purpose of bringing it about; the members of the council took the opposite view." But Maurepas was clever, more so than Turgot, and he ended by isolating him.

Condorcet wrote to Turgot to beg of him to persevere in his resistance, and most of his arguments were no

doubt in perfect agreement with those which Turgot gave to himself.

"People say," Condorcet writes (October or November 1774), "that the old parliament is about to return unconditionally, that is to say, with its insolence, its pretensions, and its prejudices. From this arrangement it results that all reforms in the laws are impossible, because our laws are excellent for the judges and detestable for the persons tried. The more cruel, secret, and oppressive criminal jurisprudence is, the more powerful are the parliaments. As these gentlemen ignore or despise public opinion, their only anxiety, it is said, will always be to enjoy the favour of the population; they will defend all the tyrannies of the prohibitive system, stand in the way of all freedom, and excite seditions against any minister who would endeavour to establish a liberal policy. As these gentlemen hold the views maintained by the fools of the fourteenth century, as they are ridiculously ignorant of all that is not to be found in the Olim register, as they despise all light, all philosophy, and are puffed up with an amount of pride equal to their ignorance, they will be the enemies of all light, they will persecute it, and will try to drive us back to that state of barbarism which in their remonstrances they call the simplicity of good old times . . . .

"Adieu, sir; I cannot tolerate that you should be a minister, and yet that good should be unattainable."

Turgot, no doubt, took care not to show Condorcet's letter to the members of the council; and if he opposed

the reinstatement of the parliaments, it was, of course, by adducing the interests of the royal authority. A pupil of the *physiocrates*, he was necessarily touched by their doctrines, those even which might have seemed to him excessive. He further believed, with the utmost sincerity, that the king had the power of altering the ancient institutions of the country whenever the good of the public made it a duty for him to do so, and he did not admit that the intervention of the parliament was necessary to impart to the royal decisions a compulsory legislative character. Some persons have even ascribed to him the following maxim, so often repeated since by the Jacobin school, that is to say, by the men who have always been most opposed to his economic doctrines: "Allow me five years of despotism, and France shall be free."

We must acknowledge that Turgot had not all his freedom of action to oppose, in the council and in the presence of the king, the proposition made by Maurepas to recall the parliaments. He had helped in the dismissal of Terray and Maupeou, and it was Terray himself whose place he had filled, after having had to put up with him as a colleague, we know with impatience, for the space of three months. It was at a meeting of the council, while he sat in his capacity as Minister of the Navy, on the anniversary of Saint Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1774, that the exile of Terray and of Maupeou had been decided. He was, accordingly, responsible, as well as his colleagues, for what was called a *Saint Bartholo-*

*mew's massacre of ministers*, and he certainly would not have contradicted Count d'Aranda, who, hearing the phrase, had added: "Yes, but it is not the massacre of the Innocents." Maupeou's exile had for its natural consequence the reinstatement of the parliaments. Turgot was obliged to put up with it, because the proposition of Maurepas was the natural consequence of a political system to which he had associated himself with distinction. On November 29, 1774, Louis XVI, in a bed of justice, reinstated in their functions the members of the parliament of Paris who had been deprived of them on January 24th, 1771; but he took, or thought he took, in a series of edicts registered at that same bed of justice, precautions against the administrative or political encroachments of the judicial courts. The parliament met, several days later, to protest against the diminution of its authority, and soon matters resumed their old course, despite the edicts which accompanied the reinstalment of the judges. The parliament looked upon itself as charged quite as much by the past, if not more, to defend what it called the old constitution of the realm against the reforms which it was the design of some persons to introduce into it.

The day when parliament recovered its power has been a fatal one for France. It was only too easy to perceive that the parliament would fatally become the instrument of Turgot's downfall, and that by persisting in maintaining the order of things to which the name of *ancien régime* has been given, it would render a peaceful revolution more and more difficult.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PREPARATION OF THE "GRANDS ÉDITS." —THE "ÉDITS" OF 1776.—THE BED OF JUSTICE.

INTERRUPTED by the *guerre des farines*, but still bent upon rooting up prejudices, privileges, and abuses; encouraged, besides, by the victory he had just gained, by the trust which the king had shown in him, and by the accession of his friend, the wise Malesherbes, to the ministry, Turgot renewed, with all the activity of which he was capable, the study of his great plans, already in a very forward state of progress. He did so without ostentation, but without mystery, and those who were to suffer from them could prepare leisurely to defend their interests, those of their families and of their friends.

In the forefront of his adversaries Turgot was to meet the parliament and then the clergy, the court, the Choiseul coterie, the Parisian *bourgeoisie*, threatened in the six trades-guilds which composed it, and, finally, in the cabinet itself, first the keeper of the seals, Hue de Miroménil, and, lastly, the prime minister himself, Maurepas.

The clergy looked upon him, not unreasonably, as a

*philosophe.* They remembered that passage of the *Conciliateur* where Turgot said, *à propos* of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes: "Religion was dishonoured for the purpose of flattering Louis XIV"; they also remembered that other opinion, strongly expressed, that "the king should no more be the head of the Church than the head of the Church be king." "Supremacy, as the English understand it, and the temporal power of the Papacy, such are the two extreme points of abuses." Nor had the clergy forgiven him the efforts he had made to obtain the modification of the oath taken by the king on his coronation. Turgot had asked Louis XVI to strike out of the oath the passage where he swore to "exterminate completely from his dominions all the heretics condemned nominatively by the Church."

To this Louis XVI would probably have consented; he had been touched by the observations which his *contrôleur général* had submitted to him; but, beset by Maurepas, who did not wish to quarrel with the bishops, he had defended himself feebly, had yielded at last, and had pronounced the old form, contenting himself with stammering it out in a few unintelligible words.

A striking proof subsists of the effect which Turgot had produced upon the king whilst submitting to him his observations *vivâ voce*, and by writing, whilst following him to Reims, for the purpose of speaking to him, up to the last moment, of the declaration of intolerance forced upon him. This proof consists in an autograph note of the king, dated Reims, June 10th, 1775, addressed

to Turgot, and preserved amongst the Lantheuil papers: "I did not send for you, sir, to give you an answer to your letter of yesterday, because I preferred leaving with you a written statement as a proof of the opinion I entertain of you on this occasion. I think that the step you have taken is that of a most honourable man, one most deeply attached to me. I thank you very sincerely for it, and I shall always be very much obliged to you for speaking to me with the same straightforwardness. I cannot, however, in the present circumstances, follow your advice; I have much weighed it since; I have conferred about it with several persons, and I think that there is less inconvenience in making no alterations; at the same time, I feel none the less obliged for your advice, and you may depend upon its remaining secret, as I trust this letter will be.—LOUIS."

Turgot took no trouble to conceal the step he had taken, and, besides, he did not consider himself as defeated. After the coronation, after the king had pronounced more or less distinctly the famous sentence, he addressed to him a long letter, in which he gave him on the subject of tolerance the most admirable advice and teaching. "Can religion order, can it permit crimes? To order a crime is tantamount to commit it; he who commands a murder is looked upon as a murderer. Now, the prince who orders his subject to profess a form of religion which the subject does not believe, or to give up the one he believes, orders a crime. The subject who obeys him is guilty of a lie; he betrays his own

conscience; he does a thing which he believes God forbids him to do."

Turgot, besides, does not believe the king is bound by formulæ "drawn up in times too unenlightened. All is not lost, and your Majesty cannot be obliged to carry out what would be an unjust measure."

The pietist party *(parti dévot)*, whose leader, then, was the Comte de Provence, expressed themselves with the greatest violence on the *contrôleur général.* He who was to be Louis XVIII even stooped low enough to write with his own hand a pamphlet against the minister; but this pamphlet, entitled *le Songe de M. de Maurepas*, produced only very little effect; it converted no one, and was rêad only by those whose opinions were already formed. The pietists endeavoured to disturb the king's conscience by telling him that M. Turgot did not attend mass. "M. Turgot does not attend mass?" Louis XVI asked M. de Maurepas. "I don't know, Sire," answered Maurepas; "M. Terray attended it daily."

The queen did not like her expenditure to be controlled. Bailly relates that Turgot had obtained from the king the promise that no bills payable at sight (*ordonnances au comptant*) should be given during a certain time. A few days afterwards, a bill for 500,000 livres was presented at the treasury in the name of *a person belonging to the court.* It was the queen, they said. Turgot went to ask for the orders of the king. "I have been taken unawares," said the king. "Sire,

what am I to do?" "Don't pay." The minister obeyed.

Marie Antoinette energetically supported her favourites. It was in connection with a case referring to a friend of the Duke de Choiseul, namely, the Count de Guines, then ambassador in England, that she gave Maurepas to understand the interest he had in not incurring her displeasure. The secretary of that diplomatist claimed from his chief large sums which he had been obliged to pay, or which he still owed for Exchange speculations. He pretended to have acted as the *alias* of his ambassador, who, said he, speculated at the Stock Exchange on the diplomatic secrets with which he was acquainted. In order to support his defence, the Count de Guines asked the authorisation to produce before the law-courts some of his despatches to the king, and the council had refused to grant it. Very angry at this decision, the queen had obtained from the king the permission which the council, unanimously, had not thought it advisable to grant. Maurepas, it is said, was stupefied at the influence exercised in that circumstance by the queen over the mind of the king; he took then the resolution of leaving Turgot to himself, giving up all participation in his reforms, and throwing him overboard, if necessary to preserve his own place.

Although warned of the intrigues going on around him, Turgot followed up his plan with the greatest activity, and on the 5th of January, 1776, he laid before the council the six decrees which are his best title to

glory; he obtained the assent of the king, after the most thorough discussion, and obliged the parliament to register them in a bed of justice, notwithstanding an opposition of an extremely violent character. These decrees finally led to his downfall; he perished in the midst of his triumph.

The six decrees presented by Turgot to the king on January 5th, 1776, were of unequal importance. The first had for its object the suppression of *corvées;* the second, the suppression of the police exercised in Paris over cereals; the third, the suppression of the offices concerning the wharves, markets, and ports in Paris; the fourth, the suppression of the *maîtrises* and *jurandes;* the fifth, the suppression of the Poissy *caisse;* the sixth and last, the modification of the duty on tallow.

We shall deal exclusively here with the decrees relating to *corvées* and *jurandes.*

Several years before, Turgot had tried for the first time to free the peasants from the burden of *corvées;* it was at Limoges, where he held the office of *intendant.* He had recognised that the burden was very heavy for the persons subjected to it, and that the amount of labour it procured to the administration of public works was not very productive. He had accordingly tried to substitute for it a money-contribution. Finding it impossible to modify the law, he had placed that contribution on the same basis as the *corvée* itself, and had made of it a kind of supplement to the capitation-tax by way of subscription. It was a money-redemption paid

by the persons liable to the *corvée*, somewhat analogous to what takes place now. Redemption, as everyone knows, is optional at present; all the taxpayers do not avail themselves of it, and the money-supplies on the one side, and the supplies in kind on the other, vary from department to department. But there is a fact worth noticing: the departments where the redemption occurs in the strongest proportion are those which formed the old Limoges *généralité*. It is a tradition which dates from Turgot's times.

In the general preface common to his six decrees Turgot re-stated the conversions in money made in his *généralité*, and, following his example, in several others. He said that he might have proceeded by way of an order, if he had thought of merely suppressing the *corvée*, or if, substituting for it a money-tax, he had laid that contribution exclusively upon those liable to tallage. But his object is a different one, and he affirms immediately, and in the very first line of the preamble, that what he wishes to realise is a complete revolution in the very assessment of the taxes.

His aim is, indeed, to put down privileges, and to render amenable to taxation the members of the nobility and of the clergy in the same conditions as all the other citizens.

The decree on the *corvées* has been the most violently attacked of the six, for the simple reason that it contained so formal and so direct an attack against the privileged classes, and was a first step in the direc-

tion of equality of all proprietors with reference to the taxes.

"The weight of the burden," says he, "only falls, and can only fall on the poorest class of our subjects, those whose only property is their manual labour and their industry, on cultivators and farmers. Landowners and almost all the privileged classes are either exempt from it or contribute to it in an infinitesimal degree; and yet it is to landowners that roads are beneficial, by the value which multiplied communications give to the produce of their lands. . . . It is therefore the class of landowners which derives the profit from the making of the roads; and they should advance the money, since they derive the interest from it. How can it be fair to oblige those people to contribute who have nothing that they can call their own; to make them give their time and their labour unremunerated, to take from them the only resource they have against misery and hunger, compelling them to work for the benefit of citizens richer than themselves? . . . Through the account which we have caused to be drawn up of the roads to be constructed and kept up in the various provinces, we believe we may venture to assure our subjects that in no year shall the expense for that purpose exceed the sum of ten millions for the whole of the *pays d'élection.* The object of this contribution being an outlay useful to all landowners, we will that all landowners, whether privileged or not, should help towards it, as is the custom in all local charges."

The preamble and the statement of the decree on the

suppression of *corvées* had been thoroughly studied, and at great length, previous to their being submitted to the king, and they were afterwards examined, and minutely examined, by the keeper of the seals, Hue de Miroménil. In his history of the downfall of the *ancien régime*, Chérest tells us that the king asked, besides, the opinion of another member of the council, who, he thinks, was Malesherbes. The memoir ascribed by Chérest to Malesherbes is preserved in the State Paper Office.

Miroménil has drawn up his observations in following, paragraph by paragraph and clause by clause, the preamble and the statement of the decree. He begins by declaring his impartiality; he does justice to the intentions of the author of the project, and expresses his design not to oppose a real contradiction, but to discuss as it deserves so important a matter. He then recapitulates the works of Orry and Trudaine, who thought that the *corvée* might be amended, but should not be suppressed; he tries to prove that all classes profit by the good condition of the highways; "landowners," he says, "are not the only persons who derive benefit from roads kept in good order; travellers, waggoners, even peasants who go on foot, equally reap the advantage."

To this Turgot answers: "With respect to the peasants who go on foot, the keeper of the seals will allow me to believe that the pleasure of walking on a well-pebbled road does not compensate them for the trouble they have had in making it without remuneration."

We wish we could quote from end to end, so instruc-

tive it is, the discussion carried on, pen in hand, by these two distinguished men. Miroménil shows a great deal of dexterity, and produces under the most various, and often under novel forms, arguments, the substance of which is rather old. It seems as if he does not wish to carry these arguments to extremities, and he appears to believe that modifications, easily accomplished, would suffice to reconcile the most opposite minds. Turgot does not allow himself to be shaken or disconcerted by any argument: he has always an answer ready.

Since we cannot reproduce here all Miroménil's objections, and Turgot's answers on the subject of the compensation-tax destined to form the fund for the maintenance of the highroads, we must at any rate give the principal ones.

"I shall not repeat here," says Miroménil, "what I have already said in my observations on the preamble to the project, with reference to the inconvenience that can be found, generally speaking, in the assessment of a land-tax substituted for the *corvée* of manual labour and of horses; but I shall state that the complete destruction of all these privileges is perhaps dangerous. I do not allude to those attached to certain offices, which I readily look upon as abuses, purchases for money, rather than as veritable privileges; but I cannot help saying that the privileges of the nobility should be respected in France, and that it is, I think, in the king's interest to maintain them."

Turgot answers: "The keeper of the seals seems

here to adopt the principle that, by virtue of the constitution of the State, the nobility should be free from all taxes. He seems even to think that it is dangerous to go against such a prejudice. If this prejudice is a universal one, I must be very much mistaken on the way of thinking of all the well-informed men I have seen in the course of my life; for I do not remember any society where such an idea would have been considered otherwise than as an antiquated pretension given up by all enlightened men even in the nobility. . . . The government expenses having for their object the interest of all, all should contribute to them, and the greater the advantages one derives from society, the more honoured one should feel to share in its burdens. . From this point of view the many privileges of the nobility can hardly seem fair." In another passage Turgot adds the following reflections: "A further reason finishes rendering this privilege more unfair, more onerous, and at the same time less worthy of respect. It is this: through the ease with which we can purchase a patent of nobility there is no rich man who cannot at once become a nobleman; so that the nobility includes the whole body of the rich, and the cause of the rich is no longer that of the distinguished families against the *roturier*, but that of the rich against the poor. The motives one might have had for respecting that privilege if it had been restricted to the families of the old defenders of the State, cannot certainly be looked upon with the same eye when it has become shared by the brood of

excise-farmers (*traitants*) who have plundered the country. Besides, what a government that would be which would lay all the public burdens upon the poor and exempt the rich from them!"

The memoir ascribed by Chérest to Malesherbes contains analogous observations expressed in nearly identical terms. Turgot reasonably maintained that the doctrine he upheld was the one always maintained by the statesmen who had tried to re-establish order in the finances, beginning with Desmarets, Orry, and Machault, down to himself. "All the ministers of the finances," said he, "without exception, have thought and acted in that direction; all have endeavoured to consolidate the tax of the twentieth, all have tried to restrict the privilege of the capitation-tax." The author of the memoir shares this opinion; he thus begins: "Every nobleman, I admit, is not rich, but every rich man is noble. . . . The tax which, in the eyes of reason and of justice, should be in proportion to the fortune, has become on the contrary a tax from which one is exonerated by virtue of one's fortune"; he ends in the following words: "From all I have said, I conclude that the objection raised by the parliament on behalf of the privileges of the nobility is not grounded; it would be very dangerous if the king allowed this system to obtain some favour, because it tends to destroy all the good that has been done during the last hundred years, and all that can still be accomplished in the way of taxation. Finally, although I am not more a friend of despotism than I have ever

been, I shall always say to the king, I shall say to the parliament, I shall say aloud, if necessary, in the presence of the whole nation, that the present case is one which the king should decide by his absolute will; and here is my reason: if the question is properly understood, it is a suit between the rich and the poor. Now, of whom does the parliament consist? Of persons who are all rich, compared with the people, and who are all noble, since their offices imply nobility. Who are the persons constituting the court, so powerful in its outcry? The high personages of the State, the majority of whom possess domains which shall pay the tax, but not the *corvée*. What does the Paris public consist of? A great many nobles or rich people enjoying the privileges of nobility (they are the loudest in their protests), and a multitude submitted to other impositions, but paying neither tallage nor *corvée*. Consequently, neither the remonstrances of the parliament, nor the cheers of the Parisians, nor even the complaints of the courtiers should exercise any prejudice in this affair. . . . Let the states general or provisional be summoned in France, it is my heartfelt wish, and that of all good Frenchmen. Let these assemblies be so constituted that the people may make themselves heard, and not have for sole representatives bailiffs, seneschals, office-bearers whose interests are totally different from those of the real people, and who are always depending upon a grandee or a minister; then I shall think it just that to such an assembly the assessment of the taxes should be left; but

so long as the people are not represented in the parliaments, the king, after hearing them, should judge by himself, and judge in favour of the people, because they are the poorest of all."

Turgot yielded to Miroménil only on the question of the clergy, but even then he retains his opinion. "The privilege of the clergy is liable to the same discussion as that of the nobility; I do not believe it to be better grounded. However, as by suppressing the tithes and the incidental sources of income (*casuel*), the Church property does not make up a very important item, I do not mind putting off to another time the examining of principles and dismissing here the question, so far as the clergy is concerned, although the proposal about it is a very just one." And, alluding to Maurepas's opposition, he adds: "and perhaps the opinions of the king and of the minister are not settled enough to justify us in having to enter upon two quarrels at the same time."

Miroménil pretended that there were in France three great orders—the clergy, the nobility, and the Third Estate; each of these orders had its rights, its privileges, its prejudices, perhaps, and it was necessary to retain them, such as they were. "The keeper of the seals," Turgot answers, "talks of the privileges of the Third Estate. Now, we know that the nobility and the clergy have privileges; we know also that in the Third Estate some towns and some private guilds have privileges also. But the Third Estate, taken as a body, are far from enjoying privileges; what they possess is the very reverse, since

the burdens which persons exempted from them would have borne always fall upon those who do not enjoy the exemption."

M. de Miroménil read the answers which Turgot had written on the margin of his observations, and then returned to him the whole bundle of papers with the following letter:

"M. de Miroménil sends a thousand compliments to M. Turgot, and forwards to him the *projet d'édit* with his observations. He likewise returns the papers concerning the fees payable for the use of the mills (*banalités*), acknowledging at the same time that he is not much impressed by M. Turgot's answers to his objections."

The king was more impressed by these answers than the keeper of the seals had been, and he allowed the decrees to which he had given his approval to be placed before the parliament on the 9th of February, 1776. The persons opposed to these decrees had spent in organising their resistance all the time which elapsed between the presentation of the decrees to the king and February 9th. Turgot's friends, who were aware of this, and felt anxious, wanted to have done. "The well-intentioned in the parliament," Trudaine wrote, "who are but few, wish that firmness should be displayed, and therefore we must make haste. The longer the delay, the more time our opponents will have to prepare."

The parliament registered the decree on the suppression of the Poissy *caisse*, and named commissioners to examine the others. On the 17th of February the

*procureur général* and the commissioners declared themselves unfavourable to the decree on the suppression of the *corvées;* votes were taken, and it was decided that "remonstrances should be made to the king, entreating him to withdraw the aforesaid decree as inadmissible both in substance and in its clauses.

A bed of justice was inevitable; impossible to doubt that things must come to that extremity. However, as Malesherbes hesitated to use it, nearly one month was lost, during which the cabals assumed a character of extreme violence.

Trudaine kept on urging promptness of action. "The public excitement," he wrote, "bears upon everything; we see a thousand cabals, active, violent, audacious, attacking the existence of the ministers. *They* are seen to be quiet, slow, often undecided, and people suppose them to be undecided, anxious, frightened. No one knows even whether they are united amongst themselves. In this position every delay is fraught with danger . . . Since the assembling of the parliament securities are falling at the Stock Exchange. This state of things will go on till the king has decided."

The king, on his side, did not seem moved. Marie Antoinette, writing to Maria Theresa, said: "The king has made decrees which will lead perhaps to fresh quarrels with the parliament; let us hope that these quarrels will not go as far as under the last reign, and that the king will maintain his authority."

But Malesherbes, Turgot's friend and collaborator,

asked that modifications should be introduced in the statement of the decree on the *corvée*, in order to prevent certain administrative abuses; if the assent of the parliament could not have been obtained, he would have wished an application to be made to the *Cour des Aides.*

Trudaine maintained that these half-measures would be regarded as proofs of weakness. Turgot naturally shared Trudaine's opinion. The king was on Turgot's side; they consequently resolved on holding a bed of justice.

But, in the meanwhile, the pamphlet warfare was going on with ever-increasing activity. Every day a fresh request, a fresh memoir, fresh songs, epigrams, jokes.

> "M. de Malesherbes fait tout;
> M. de Sartine doute de tout;
> M. Turgot brouille tout;
> M. de Saint-Germain renverse tout;
> M. de Maurepas rit de tout."

Turgot's friends were annoyed by all these attacks: that was wrong; they got angry: that was worse. The council satisfied them by punishing the authors of the memoirs and pamphlets, and their works were suppressed by a decree of February 22, 1776.

The parliament saw a challenge in this act of severity; and, on the 23rd of the same month, by way of answering Turgot's friends, they prosecuted a work directed against the privileged classes, creating much sensation, and entitled *les Inconvénients des droits féodaux.* The

author, Boncerf, was a clerk under Turgot; he owned the book, and was summoned to appear in person before the court. The work seems very moderate to those who read it now. The author enumerates very calmly the inconveniences attending upon feudal rights, and merely proposes that the redemption of them should be allowed or made obligatory. The present vassals might be permitted to redeem their estates; their heirs alone would be compelled to do so. The parliament considered the discussion of that system in the light of a crime, and condemned the *brochure* as "injurious to the laws and customs of France; to the sacred inalienable rights of the crown, and to the right of property in the case of private individuals; its aim was to shake the whole constitution of the monarchy, by exciting all the vassals against their lords and against the king himself, as it denounced to them all the feudal and domanial rights as so many usurpations, vexations, and violences equally odious and ridiculous."

Turgot immediately ordered Boncerf to come to him at Versailles, with the view of shielding him against the parliament, and he required that all prosecution should cease at once. On learning this act of vigour, Voltaire could not restrain his joy, and wrote to Audibert, on the 28th of February, 1776: "You know perhaps that the parliament having caused the public hangman to burn at the foot of the principal staircase an excellent book written in favour of the people by M. de Boncerf, M. Turgot's chief clerk, and having further ordered the

author to appear in person before the court, his Majesty has written commanding the parliament to suppress their sentence, and prohibiting them from denouncing books. Denunciations, the king says, are in the province of the solicitor-general exclusively, and even he cannot denounce any publication without previously taking the orders of his Majesty. These are judgments worthy of Titus and of Marcus Aurelius; but the gentlemen of the parliament are not senators of Rome. As for M. Turgot, he seems quite like an old Roman."

All these skirmishes had preceded the opening of the great hostilities. A merciless war was about to be waged at last; it was unfortunately to end by the defeat of the champions of equality, and by the triumph of the league of the privileged castes.

It is on the 2nd of March, 1776, that the parliament had decided upon the wording of its remonstrances. They had sent a deputation to Versailles to carry them to the king, asking him to fix a day and an hour when they might be officially presented to him. On the 7th of March a second deputation had come to take the orders of the king. Louis XVI received the deputation, and answered: "I have examined the remonstrances of my parliament; they contain nothing which has not been anticipated and made the subject of serious consideration."

If the parliament has not registered the decree on the suppression of the *corvées*, it is because that suppression is a violation of justice: so the remonstrance says. "The

first rule of justice consists in preserving to everyone what belongs to him: this is a fundamental rule of natural law, international law, and civil government; this rule does not consist merely in maintaining the rights of property, but in preserving those which belong to the individual, and which originate with the prerogatives attached to birth and social condition. . . ." "The right of *corvée* belonged to the Franks over their dependants. . . . When these serfs obtained their freedom, by becoming free citizens but *roturiers*, they likewise became subject to the *corvée*. If you compel the nobles to pay a tax for the redemption of the *corvée*, contrary to the maxim '*nul n'est corvéable s'il n'est taillable*,' you pronounce them liable to tallage (*taillables*) just as if they were no noblemen."

The refusal to listen to the remonstrances really an nounced a bed of justice; but, before giving an account of it, we must examine the decree on the suppression of the *jurandes* and *maîtrises* (workmen's guilds and corporations), which was carried to the same bed of justice as the decree on the abolition of the *corvée*.

The suppressions of the *jurandes* and *maîtrises*, and the establishment of unfettered labour, constitute Turgot's greatest reform, that in which his individual action has been most visible, and which has finally triumphed with the Revolution through the mere power of liberal ideas.

The suppression of privileges and the introduction of civil equality may be and have been the result of another passion than that of freedom; this is proved by the

whole of our history since 1789. The protective system and the organisation of labour are not incompatible with what people call *modern governments*, that is to say, the governments which have succeeded to the *ancien régime.* Accordingly it is to Turgot, much more than to the Revolution, that we owe freedom of labour; and it is to freedom of labour inaugurated by Turgot that the France of the nineteenth century, after the final triumph of the great minister's ideas, owes the wonderful manifestation of industrial power which our generation has been able to witness.

The preamble of the decree on the abolition of *jurandes* is a masterpiece which we must examine, and the principal parts of which we must make known by extracts.

The right of labour is a natural one; it has been interfered with by institutions, old, it is true, but which could not be legitimised either by time, or by opinions, or by the acts of the authority which seem to have invested them with a species of consideration. In nearly all the towns the exercise of the different arts and trades was concentrated within the hands of a small number of masters, forming guilds, and who alone had the privilege, to the exclusion of all the other citizens, of making or selling the objects of the special trade of which they had the exclusive privilege. Those persons who wished to take up an art or a trade as a profession, could succeed only by obtaining the rank of master (*maîtrise*); nor could they be received *masters* except after a series of long, toil-

some, and superfluous tests, and at the cost of multiplied exactions, which made him who underwent these tests lose part of the capital which he would have needed to establish himself in life, to get up a trade, or open a workshop.

Those who could not meet these expenses were obliged to have only a precarious existence under the authority of these masters, to languish in poverty, or to carry to foreign parts an industry with which they might have benefited their own country.

The citizens of all classes were deprived of the right of selecting those they would have wished to employ, nor did they possess the advantages they would have found in competition for low prices and perfection in workmanship. The simplest work could often be performed only by applying to workmen of different guilds, and one had to put up with the slowness, the dishonesty, the exactions favoured by the pretensions of these guilds, and the caprices of their arbitrary and selfish *régime.*

"These abuses have crept in by degrees. Originally they resulted from private interest acting against the public one. It is after a long interval of time that the authority, now taken by surprise, now deceived by a semblance of usefulness, gave to these abuses a kind of sanction. The origin of the evil is in the very power allowed to the workmen of the same trade to assemble in one guild."

The preamble shows that the trades' corporations were born at the same time as the *communes.* When the

towns began to throw off the feudal yoke, and to form *communes*, the facility of classifying the citizens according to their professions introduced this custom, which was till then unknown. "The various professions then became, in a fashion, so many separate communities of which the general community was made up. The ecclesiastical brotherhoods, by further fastening the bonds which united together persons belonging to the same profession, furnished them with more frequent opportunities of assembling together, and occupying themselves, in these meetings, with the common interests belonging to that special society, interests which they prosecuted with steady activity, to the prejudice of those which concerned the general society. The communities, once formed, drew up statutes, for which they got the authorisation of the police, under various pretexts of public benefit."

The preamble then goes on to enumerate the clauses of most of the statutes belonging to the various communities, tyrannical as they are, and contrary to the public good. The principal object of these communities was to limit as much as possible the number of the masters, and render the acquisition of the masterships almost impossible for any but the children of the masters.

"The spirit of monopoly which has directed the drawing up of the statute has been pushed to the last extremity. There are some which exclude from apprenticeships, and, consequently, from masterships, the young men who marry before they have obtained the position of

masters. Women are excluded from the professions the most natural to them, as embroidery, which they may not do on their own account.

"We shall not follow any further the enumeration of the dispositions, fantastic, tyrannical, contrary to humanity and morality, with which those obscure codes are full, drawn up by avarice, adopted unexamined in obscure times, and which, had they been known, would have been the object of public indignation."

The decree comprises 24 articles.

Article 1 declares that all persons, even foreigners, are free to exercise any trade, profession of arts, or industry they like, and even to exercise several together. All guilds and corporations of trades and artizans are suppressed, as also the *maîtrises* and *jurandes*.

Articles 2 and 3 direct all traders and artizans to make a preliminary declaration before the lieutenant-general of police, in order that a register of entries may be kept.

Articles 4 and 5 exempt from the previous clauses the barbers, hairdressers, bath-keepers (*étuvistes*), because their masterships had been officially created, and the moneys paid for them had been entered amongst the incidental income of the king. . . . The goldsmiths, chemists, printers, and booksellers were likewise exempted, as being under special police regulations.

Articles 6-9 stipulate the conditions under which the entries of the artizans should be made on the registers, and the precautions to be taken for the sale of drugs.

Article 10 establishes syndics in the various districts of the towns throughout the kingdom, especially in Paris; these syndics shall watch over the traders and workmen of their respective districts; without any distinction of trade or profession, they shall send in reports to the head of the police, receive and transmit his orders.

Articles 11 and 12 give the summary proceedings from which the lieutenant-general of police shall judge the disputes arising from bad and defective labour.

The *gardes-jurés* (members of the jury of a guild or corporation) are expressly prohibited by Article 13 to continue the exercise of their functions.

Article 14 is the one which has most frequently been attacked since the Revolution. It forbids all masters, companions, workmen, and apprentices of the guilds and corporations to form amongst themselves any association or assembly under any pretence whatever.

The following articles settle questions of jurisdiction, of procedure, and prescribe the forms to be observed in the liquidation of the various communities, especially those of the city of Paris, the net result of which, after all debts paid, was to be equally divided between the masters.

Such is the celebrated decree which introduced in France for the first time the freedom of work. The detractors of the reform were numerous then; there are still some at the present day; we shall reproduce their objections, for the parliament appropriated them, whilst giving an account of the bed of justice.

That assembly, in which Turgot's famous decrees were registered, took place at Versailles, March 12th, 1776. The speakers were the king, the keeper of the seals, Hue de Miroménil, the senior president, d'Aligre, and Séguier, the crown advocate.

"Gentlemen," said the king, "I have assembled you to make my will known to you; my keeper of the seals shall state it."

Miroménil then spoke. He briefly explained what the decrees were, justifying them, even the one on the suppression of the *corvées*, which he had so perseveringly opposed in the council. His speech is, in a certain sense, a very brief analysis of the general preamble, and of the preambles special to each decree. The duties of his office obliged him to defend what he had so strongly attacked.

The senior president, speaking on behalf of the parliament, after the keeper of the seals, expressed himself in a pompous style, and as if struck by terror.

"Sire, on this day when your Majesty displays your power only through the conviction that you are manifesting your kindness, the pomp with which your Majesty is surrounded, the absolute exercise you are making of your authority, impress all your subjects with profound dread, and are for us the omen of a terrible constraint.... Why should deep sadness offer itself to-day to the august looks of your Majesty? If you condescend to survey your people, you see the people in a state of consternation; if you look at the metropolis, you find it

alarmed. . . . This decree (the one on the *corvées*), by the introduction of a new kind of perpetual and arbitrary taxation on land, inflicts serious prejudice on the prospects both of the poor and of the rich, and constitutes a fresh blow on the natural freedom of the nobility and the clergy, whose distinctions and rights are bound up with the constitution of the monarchy."

Going on, next, to the decree on the suppression of the *jurandes*, he declares that "such a decree breaks at once all the ties of order established for the professions of merchants and artizans. It leaves without rule and without order turbulent and licentious young men, who, scarcely kept within proper bounds by the public police, by the discipline preserved in the various communities, and by the domestic authority exercised by the masters over their companions, are capable of rushing into excesses of every kind.

The keeper of the seals caused the decree on the *corvées* to be read next, and he said to "the people of the king" that they were at liberty to speak. Séguier then pronounced a discourse, in which he developed all the arguments developed by Miroménil in his private observations, concluding by proposing that, in times of peace, soldiers should be employed in the maintenance of the roads.

After this address, to which no answer was made, the keeper of the seals took the orders of the king, previous to collecting the votes, for form's sake beginning with the princes of the blood, then, having first walked up to

the king, and walked down again to reach his place, he pronounced the following words, seated, and with his hat on :

"The king, holding his bed of justice, has ordered and does order that the decree just read shall be registered at the *greffe* (registrar's office) of his parliament."

The same ceremony took place for the other decrees, namely, the one on the police measures regulating the sale of corn in Paris, and the one for the suppression of offices in the market-places. The decree on the abolition of *jurandes* only came fourth.

In order to state the reasons which the parliament had for resisting that decree, Séguier made a speech much longer than the previous ones.

From his point of view, the corporations might be looked upon as so many small republics exclusively engrossed by the general interest of all the members which compose them ; and, if it is true that the general interest is formed by the combination of the interests of all the members in particular, it seemed to him that every member, whilst labouring for his own private benefit, worked necessarily even, unknown to himself, for the real benefit of the whole corporation. If you loosen the springs which set in motion this multitude of different communities, if you destroy the *jurandes*, if you abolish the regulations, in one word, if you disunite the members of all the communities, you suppress the resources of every kind which trade itself should desire for its preservation.

The king's advocate then drew the picture of the isolated workman free to indulge in all the excesses of an imagination often unruly, eager for gain, and preparing secret means for duping both his fellow-citizens and foreigners. "It is these bonds (those of the *régime* proceeding by regulations), these restrictions, these prohibitions, which make the glory, the safety, the immensity of French commerce."

Séguier readily acknowledged that there were defects in the constitution of the communities; "but there are no institutions into which some defects have not crept; and there is an immense difference between getting rid of abuses, and destroying the corporations where these abuses may be found." The number of communities seemed to him too great. "What is the use, for instance," said he, "that flower-girls should form a community subject to regulations? what is the need of statutes to sell flowers and make bouquets of them?" There are unions which he found opportune, such as that of the tailors with the old-clothes men, the eating-house keepers with the sellers of roast poultry (*rôtisseurs*), the bakers and the pastry-cooks. He likewise admitted that women might rise to the mastership in order to be dressmakers, embroiderers, hairdressers. "But we must retain what has been sanctioned by Henry IV, Louis XIV, Sully, and Colbert. Never was prince more beloved than Henry IV, and Colbert, who changed the face of France and revived trade, caused an order to be issued to the effect that all persons carrying on traffic or

commerce in the city of Paris should be for the future constituted as communities of *jurandes* and *maîtrises.*"

After Séguier's harangue, the decree was registered. The decree moderating the duty on tallow, read the last, gave occasion to a few remarks only, and the long sitting, which had been protracted over five hours, concluded with the usual form and ceremony.

It is worthy of notice that Articles 13 and 14 of the decree on the *jurandes*, which, later on, created such discussions amongst the economic and liberal school, suggested no observations at the time when the decree was published, and gave rise to no contestation either on the part of the trades-guilds in the memoirs which they caused to be drawn up and distributed, or on the part of the parliament in its remonstrances, or, finally, on that of the crown advocate in his harangues at the bed of justice.

The articles we allude to are those which prohibited all associations or assemblies of workmen or masters belonging to the same business.

It is in our time alone that persons have seen in these articles the translation into a legislative enactment of the famous maxim for which Adam Smith has been so much blamed, and which has been sometimes excused on the ground that it was nothing but a whim. It was, however, the sincere expression of fear lest the law should not protect with sufficient efficaciousness the freedom of the consumer.

Adam Smith wrote that persons belonging to the

same trade seldom meet, even for a pleasure-party or for motives of distraction, but the conversation ends by some plot against the public, or some machination to raise prices.

By forbidding artizans to associate and meet together, Turgot, we must own, placed an impediment in the exercise of a right which the liberal school has always claimed in modern times. But, on the day when he suppressed the *maîtrises* and the *jurandes*, he had not—and this should be borne in mind—either the thought or the pretension of legislating on the right of speaking and of association. He wished simply to bring back the corporations to the common law of the day; and the common law, then, in France, implied neither the right of association nor that of meeting.

The endeavour to reconcile the right for private individuals to form associations, and the right for the State to protect itself against what has been called *a state within the State*, is an altogether new problem. Turgot had not to preoccupy himself in 1776 about a question which was not born, and, besides, if, anticipating the future, he had tried to solve it, would he be very guilty for not having succeeded? It is a problem which, for the last hundred years, has been in France the most constant preoccupation of statesmen belonging to all parties. We have had governments founded upon the principle of authority, and others founded upon the principle of liberty. The latter have not, on this point, given more satisfaction than the former to liberal views;

and the laws on the freedom of association do not yet exist. The rights of associations and those of the State are still opposed to each other. The discussion is even now pending, and no one has yet succeeded in discovering the formula which shall guarantee them respectively without either enslaving the citizens or disarming the State.

## CHAPTER VII.

INCREASING DIFFICULTIES.—RETREAT OF MALESHERBES.—SECRET LETTERS.—DISMISSAL OF TURGOT.—HIS RETREAT.—HIS DEATH.

WHAT impression did the king receive from that day? It is difficult to know. Turgot, had he wearied him by requiring of him that new and so considerable effort? It is certain, at any rate, that the influences of all Turgot's adversaries made themselves felt from that time with an increasing strength which soon became irresistible.

The queen had succeeded in getting completely the upper hand over the king, and she soon gave a last proof of that fact *à propos* of the same Count de Guines on whose behalf she had already induced the king to interfere, despite the unanimous opinion of the council. The end was drawing near.

At the time when the American affairs were beginning to preoccupy them, M. de Vergennes and Turgot had strongly urged the king to grant them authority to recall Count de Guines from London. They considered him rightly as unqualified to deal with delicate affairs. The king had yielded to their reasons, and

had even written to Count de Vergennes, informing him that he gave him all power to change the ambassador. The queen, extremely irritated by this resolution, had ascribed to Turgot, still more than to Vergennes, the disgrace of her favourite. She could not indeed cause the Count de Guines to be reinstated into the embassy which had just been taken away from him, but she obtained for him the title of Duke, together with a congratulatory letter written by the king himself. "I render justice to your conduct," wrote Louis XVI to him, "and I grant to you the honours of the Louvre, together with the permission of assuming the title of Duke. You are at liberty to show this letter." Count de Mercy writes to Maria Theresa: "In the matter of Count de Guines, the king finds that he has evidently been contradicting himself by autograph letters written to Count de Vergennes and Count de Guines—letters entirely opposed to each other; he further compromises himself and all his ministers in the eyes of the public, who know perfectly well that this is brought about by the will of the queen, and through a kind of violence exercised by her over the king. The *contrôleur général*, informed of the hatred which the queen bears towards him, has decided on retiring, chiefly on that account; the queen's plan was to insist upon the king's dismissing Turgot, and even sending him to the Bastille on the very day when Count de Guines should be declared duke, and only the strongest and most urgent remonstrances could stop the consequences of the queen's anger; that anger has no

other motive than the steps which Turgot felt bound to take for the recall of Count de Guines." Since the bed of justice, Turgot's enemies were jubilant; they knew that the king was tired, and everyone felt certain of the downfall of the *contrôleur général.* The *mot* which Trudaine had uttered the day before the decrees had been sent to the parliament was becoming a reality. "Be sure," he had written to Turgot, "that there is not one councillor in the parliament who does not consider the forwarding of the decrees as the end of your ministry. If this misfortune should happen, I believe that the king's authority would be ruined for the whole of his reign."

The Choiseul party no longer concealed their joy. "*The* Turgot is in a state of dissolution," said Madame du Deffant in a letter to the Duchess de Choiseul; and when she heard the news about "*the* Turgot," she wrote: "What events, what surprises, and, I may add, what joy, and what pleasure; the triumph of M. de Guines is, I own, what has pleased me most." The Duchess de Choiseul answered: "I have, like you, been overwhelmed with joy at the triumph of M. de Guignes; I think that the disgrace of the two ministers, which has accompanied it, makes him look like the Roman generals enjoying the honours of triumph, and dragging their slaves in their train." On the 1st of June, 1776, Galiani wrote to Madame d'Épinay: "By the arrival of the ambassador's brother-in-law, I had learnt the change of the ministry, and I had learnt nothing more than what I knew when

M. Turgot was appointed *contrôleur général.* Pray read over again the letter I wrote to you then."

The prophecy contained in the letter alluded to by him had really been a most singular one, and reflected the greatest credit on his perspicacity. Here is the passage to which he refers, and it can be read in the letter he addressed from Naples to Madame d'Épinay, September 17, 1774: "At last M. Turgot is *contrôleur général.* He will remain in office for too short a time to be able to carry out his systems; the administration of the finances will be too like his brother's Cayenne. He will punish a few rogues, he will be out of temper, he will get angry; he will wish to do good, but will meet everywhere with thorns, difficulties, rogues. Credit will diminish, he will be detested, people will say that he is not fit for the work; enthusiasm will cool down, he will retire or be dismissed, and once more people will discover the error of having appointed to an office like his, in a monarchy like yours, a man who is both virtuous and a staunch philosopher." Subaltern intrigues are mentioned, those, amongst others, of the Marquis de Pezay, who had contrived to attract the notice of the king, and had given him notes on the budget of receipts and expenditure, such as Turgot had prepared it. It is said that these notes had been drawn up for M. de Pezay by Necker himself, and that they stated matters with a great deal of cleverness in a way most unfavourable to the *contrôleur général.* To use the Abbé Galiani's expression, some persons said that "he was not good for

the work." There was also an episode of forged letters intercepted by the "Black Cabinet." Dupont de Nemours relates it in detail.

All these secondary manœuvres may have had some effect in embittering the mind of the king; but the opposition of the queen, the resignation of Malesherbes, which occurred then, and the singularly severe and somewhat haughty letters which Turgot wrote to the king with the view of thwarting the influence of Maurepas, and asking that Malesherbes should be replaced by a friend of reforms—all these circumstances sufficiently explain the final crisis.

In an absolute monarchy, such as was that of Louis XVI, as well as under a parliamentary government, like modern ones, ministerial crises are always produced by questions of confidence. Turgot had lost the confidence of the king, and no ministerial combination could restore it to him. The question was no longer to admit this or that person in the combination so as to have his support in the struggle with the privileged classes. The king had made up his mind, and that was all. Just as a parliamentary minister can do nothing to maintain his position when the majority have resolved upon withdrawing their confidence from him, so Turgot could do nothing because the king would have him no more; better if he had sent in his resignation at the same time as Malesherbes. Instead of retiring, Turgot, with whom the king had for some time avoided to hold any conversation, wrote to Louis XVI four secret letters in the shape

of memoirs, and two of them have, fortunately, reached us. The Abbé Soulavie had mentioned them in his diffuse and confused history; he had affirmed that in one Turgot had said to the king "a terrible, a frightful truth; he had pointed out to that young king, naturally full of fears and of timidity, that the destiny of feeble princes is that of Charles I or Charles IX." If we may believe Soulavie, he saw these letters amongst the papers of Louis XVI; the one where Charles I is mentioned had been placed by the king in an envelope, sealed with the smallest royal seal, of the size of a *centime*, with this inscription in his own handwriting: "Letters of Turgot." Soulavie's assertion had never been considered very serious by the historians of Turgot, when M. de Larcy discovered in 1868 the entire original of it in Very's memoirs. The document is so curious, and it throws so much light upon the last days of Turgot's ministry, that we shall give further on a certain number of passages from it. A still more recent discovery has, besides, removed all the doubts which might have been entertained as to the existence of the letters in question, and the authenticity of that which M. de Larcy has published. M. le Marquis Turgot has found in the Lantheuil archives a sheet of paper serving originally as wrapper to a bundle of papers of which not one remains; but on that wrapper Malesherbes had written with his own hand the following observations: "This bundle contains four letters written by M. Turgot to the king at the time when the selection of my successor was being considered.

M. Turgot wrote to the king with the zeal which should actuate the minister the most devoted to the service of the crown, and with the confidence one has in one's trustiest friend.

"He tells him in the clearest manner what he thought of those who were at the head of the administration, and of the persons best qualified to fill the vacant office; and even when he mentions his friends, he does not think he should conceal from the king the defects he knows they have.

"The most austere virtue pervades these four letters; but, on the one hand, and in the interest of those of whom he speaks, it would be extremely annoying if anyone knew what he told the king in this confidential statement; and nothing is certainly more contrary to M. Turgot's intentions than to leave, in writing, notes of what he thought right to say to the king alone.

"I, who speak of this, have no personal interest in the matter, for he praises me unreservedly; not but that he certainly knew that I had defects, for I have many; but, as I was about to resign, the interest of the king's service did not require that they should be revealed to him, and they have not been so. But there are certain persons named on whose behalf I claim the most absolute silence, although they have not commissioned me to do so, because they do not know what is said of them; and those for whom I do most interfere have an equal interest in demanding of the family the suppression of these documents. Indeed, M. Turgot can feel no

regret at such a suppression, because they are not memoirs in which M. Turgot explains to the king his principles as an administrator, memoirs which would be most worthy of being preserved. He has only said there on the necessity of maintaining authority what everyone has already said, and on the application of these principles, which is the subject of his long memoir, he only described the character of persons, which does not deserve preservation.

"I trust that the letters themselves, written to the king, shall be buried in the deepest oblivion. If the contrary should happen, it will be the fault neither of M. Turgot nor of his family; but they should not have to reproach themselves for contributing to this by the preservation of the rough drafts. I even exhort M. le Marquis Turgot to give up the idea of reading them himself; I repeat to him that he makes no sacrifice by doing so; I, who read them seven or eight days after they had been entrusted to me, I wish now I had never read them; so much do I fear lest, if the secrets of the minister to the king should be one day revealed, the accusation of that revelation should fall upon me. I add, that this secret being that of the king as much as that of the ministry, it is a mark of respect due to the king to burn the letters, if possible in the presence of some one qualified to certify the fact to him."

The documents contained in that wrapper were evidently the rough drafts of the letters seen by Soulavie in 1793, and are now lost. The drafts en-

closed in the bundle, of which the wrapper alone has been preserved in the Lantheuil archives, were no doubt burned, as Malesherbes wished.

The copy of one of the four letters was probably sent to Very by Turgot himself, who wanted to show to him in what terms he had insisted on his being selected in the place of Malesherbes, and on his being named minister of the royal household.

Another letter has been copied by Soulavie, and inserted by him in his *Mémoires historiques* as an annexed document amongst the *pièces justificatives.* It refers to the petition of a certain Chanvallon, who, suing for the revision of a lawsuit, was endeavouring to compromise the president (Turgot's brother) and Turgot himself. It was a machination of Sartine, and Turgot denounced it to the king.

"Last year, M. de Sartine informed me of all the steps taken; asked, so to say, my consent, which I took care not to refuse; insisted, in spite of myself, on my hearing the special report which M. Chardon made to him, at his own house, of the whole affair; and now, everything is mysteriously conducted and is made public only in opposition to M. de Sartine. It is no longer I who am warned beforehand. And yet everyone knows that I am not capable of asking a denial of justice against anybody; but it is M. de Choiseul who gets the information before his departure for Chanteloup. Whence this difference? It is easily explained: last year, the accession of M. de Malesherbes to the ministry, the kindnesses with

which your Majesty honoured me, left no hope to those who wished for my downfall; they wanted either to win me over, or, at least, to seem as if they desired my friendship. This year, the resignation of M. de Malesherbes, the combination, more decided, of all parties against me, my complete isolation, the tolerably well-known dislike of M. de Miroménil, and his influence over M. de Maurepas, everything persuades me that I am holding on merely by a thread. That thread must be broken, and then we must contrive secretly a fresh plot which shall bring back on the stage an old and well-forgotten affair, hence the publication of defamatory memoirs, first in a MS. form, then printed; so is my time wasted in defending either my brother or myself, and this announces, at any rate, that I have lost my credit: that is, Sire, why the conduct of M. de Sartine in 1776 is so different from what it was in 1775."

The other letter, the one of which the Abbé de Very had the copy, bears likewise the date April 30, 1776. Its character is so singular, it throws so much new light on Turgot's personal relations with the king, that it deserves serious meditation.

"Sire, I will not conceal from your Majesty the deep pain I felt at heart in consequence of your cruel silence towards me, last Sunday, after what I had told you with so full a detail in my previous letters about my position, about your own, about the danger which threatens both your authority and the glory of your reign, about the impossibility of my serving you unless you come to my

assistance. Your Majesty has not condescended to give me an answer. . . . I have set at defiance the hatred of all those to whom some abuses are profitable. So long as I entertained the hope that your Majesty valued me, so long as I hoped to do good, nothing has been spared on my part. Your Majesty sees the impossibility in which I am to resist those who injure me, both by the evil they inflict upon me, and by the good they prevent me from doing, thwarting, as they do, all my operations, and your Majesty, nevertheless, gives me neither assistance nor consolation.

"Your Majesty said to me that you wanted more time for reflexion, and that you lacked experience. You do lack experience, Sire. I am aware that at the age of two-and-twenty, and in your position, you have not the resources which the habit of living with one's equals gives to private individuals when they wish to judge men. But will your experience be greater in a week? in a month? And must you wait till that slow experience has arrived, in order to adopt a resolution?

"I have described to you all the evils caused by the weakness of the late king, I have unfolded before you the progress of the intrigues which had, by degrees, made his authority contemptible. I venture to entreat you to read that letter over again; then ask yourself whether you wish to run the risk of the same dangers, I shall even say greater dangers still.

"At the age of forty Louis XV enjoyed the whole amount of his authority. The public mind was not

excited then; no corporation had as yet tried its strength. You are twenty-two, Sire, and the parliaments are already more animated, more audacious, more united to court-cabals, than they were in 1770, after twenty years of enterprises and of success. Minds are a thousand times more animated on all sorts of questions, and your cabinet is almost as divided and weaker than that of your predecessor. Think, Sire, that, according to the course of nature, you have fifty more years to reign, and think of the progress which a disaffection can make after having reached in twenty years the state we see. Oh! Sire, do not wait till such experience has been your lot, and know how to profit by that of others.

"Sire, I owe to M. de Maurepas the situation which your Majesty has entrusted to me; this I shall never forget; never shall I fail in what I am bound to testify of him; but I am a thousand times under greater obligations to the State and to your Majesty. I could not, without being guilty of a crime, sacrifice the interests of either. It costs me horribly to tell you that M. de Maurepas is really guilty if he proposes to you M. Amelot (to replace Malesherbes), or, at any rate, that his weakness would be as fatal to you as a premeditated crime . . . .

"At any rate, it is so evident to me that I cannot remain alone and isolated, as I am now, that even if my duty did not oblige me to tell you the whole truth, I could not have any interest in concealing it from you. If I displease you by so doing, I beg of your Majesty to tell

me so, or to favour me with a letter to that effect. I do not wish to shake your confidence in M. de Maurepas: he deserves it in many ways by his experience, his knowledge, his great acquaintance with business, his wonderful memory, his amiability, his sincere attachment to what is good and to your own person.

"But, Sire, you must surely be aware how weak-minded M. de Maurepas is, and how he is overruled by the opinions of those who see him. Everyone knows that Madame de Maurepas, infinitely less witty than her husband, has much more character, and inspires him with all her wishes. Public opinion likewise produces upon him an impression which is extraordinary in a sensible man, who, with his intelligence, should have views of his own. I have seen him change his opinion ten times on the occasion of the bed of justice, according as he looked either at the keeper of the seals or at M. Albert, lieutenant of police, or at myself. It is thanks to that unfortunate uncertainty, of which the parliament was faithfully informed, that the resistance of the assembly was so prolonged. If the Abbé de Very had not contributed to strengthen his friend, I should not be astonished to hear that he would have given up everything, and advised your Majesty to give way to the parliament. That weakness it is which makes him adopt so easily the clamours of the courtiers against me, and which deprives me of almost all power in my office.

"Do not forget, Sire, that it is weakness which placed the head of Charles I on the block; it is weak-

ness which rendered Charles IX cruel; it is weakness which organised the *Ligue* under Henry IV; which made of Louis XIII, as it now makes of the king of Portugal, crowned slaves; it is weakness which caused all the misfortunes of the late reign.

"People believe you are weak, Sire, and occasions have been when I feared lest you should have that defect; and yet, in other circumstances still more delicate, I have seen you display real courage.

"You have said it yourself, Sire, experience is wanting in you; you need a guide, and that guide should possess both mind and strength. M. de Maurepas has the former of these qualities, and he cannot have the latter unless he himself is backed up. He does not feel so, he even dreads it; I see as much by the selection he has in view, and by the little amount of effort he has made to determine you in favour of the Abbé de Very. I see that he dreads precisely that which would give him strength. He does not feel that after having isolated me, after having made your Majesty dislike me, and compelled me to leave you, the storm now directed against me will fall upon him, and that he will end by giving way, carrying along with him your authority, or, perhaps, after having ruined it . . . . Such, Sire, is your present position: a cabinet weak and disunited; all the minds in a state of ferment; the parliaments leagued with all the cabals, emboldened by a patent weakness (your Majesty has seen in a letter which I have confided to you, the very *naïve* expression of their thoughts),

an income below the expenditure, the greatest resistance to indispensable economy, no harmony, no stability in plans, no secrecy in the resolutions of your councils; and it is in the midst of such circumstances that a man is proposed to your Majesty, destitute of all talent, and whose only merit is his subserviency—to whom? not to the one amongst your ministers who shows some strength in his office, but to the keeper of the seals, who by his insinuations further increases his disposition to weakness. It is in these circumstances that your Majesty cannot be struck by the dangers which I have pointed out to you with so much evidence.

"Really, Sire, I fail to understand you; people may have said to you that I was hot-headed and chimerical; yet it seems to me that all I am telling you is not like the ravings of a madman. It seems even to me that the operations I have made, despite the clamours, the opposition they have met with, have had the success I foretold; and if I am no madman, if the dangers I have shown to you have any reality about them, your Majesty cannot, without failing in your own sense of duty, rush into them by condescension for M. de Maurepas.

"I beg of you to reflect once again before you make up your mind to an appointment which will be bad in itself, and fatal by its consequences. Finally, if I am so unfortunate that this letter should bring upon me your Majesty's displeasure, I entreat you to inform me that such is the case. Anyhow, I rely upon your keeping the matter secret."

The king did not answer this letter, any more than the previous ones which Turgot had written to him on that day or at an earlier date. He had to choose between Maurepas and Turgot, and his selection was made beforehand. He could not be influenced by the last effort which Turgot made in writing to him with so much bluntness. Far from that! He must even have seen there an effort to gain the mastery over his will, and to govern by placing him, the king, so to say, out of the government.

On the 31st of April, the day when he caused this fourth and final letter to be delivered to Louis XVI, no doubt by M. d'Angivilliers, Turgot wrote to Very, without alluding yet to the last effort he had just attempted, and begged of him to come to Paris for the purpose of influencing the mind of his old friend Maurepas, and inducing him to choose the successor of Malesherbes amongst the champions of reform. Ten days afterwards, on the 10th of May, he wrote to him that all was over, and that the successor of Malesherbes was really Amelot.

He, however, still hoped to have the time to draw up a plan for the reform of the king's household. "The plan will certainly not be adopted, and I shall ask to be set free."

The next day, May 11, 1776, a fresh letter: "The Marquis de Noailles is ambassador in England, M. de la Vauguyon in Holland, M. de Guines has the patent of Duke, and is therefore as white as snow."

Finally, on the 12th of May, his colleague Bertin delivered to him, on the part of the king, the order to give up his functions. Maurepas wrote to him: "If I had been at liberty, sir, to follow my first impulse, I would have called upon you. Superior orders have prevented me from doing so. I beg you to be persuaded of the share I take in your situation." Turgot, answering him, began by the following words: "I receive, sir, the letter you have honoured me with; I do not doubt the share you have taken in the event of the day, and I feel every proper gratitude on the subject." Two days after, May 14th, he wrote to Very: "Your old friend has caused me to be dismissed without waiting for me to ask for my retreat."

On the 18th of May, after having obtained leave from the king, Turgot wrote to him a letter, which Dupont de Nemours has published, and which forms a worthy parallel to that by which he accepted, two years before, the office of *contrôleur général*. He alludes in it to the four secret letters of which we have spoken. "The step which I have taken, and which seems to have displeased you, must have proved to you that no motive, could attach me to my office, for it was impossible that I should not be aware of the risk I was running, and I should not have exposed myself to it had I preferred my fortune to my duty. You have also seen in my letters how impossible it was for me to be of any useful service in that place, and consequently to retain it, if you left me there isolated and without any help."

When he speaks "of the step which he has taken," some persons have thought that Turgot was alluding to his interference in the business of the Count de Guines; but there can now be no doubt on the subject. The step which has displeased is the correspondence. The four letters had deeply offended the king.

Immediately after his disgrace, Turgot retired to the *château* of the Duchess d'Enville at La Roche-Guyon; then he returned to Paris. He spent the five remaining years of his life in the study of sciences and the cultivation of literature. The universal reproach addressed to him of having lost his influence by the want of pliancy in his character,* in one word, "by his awkwardness," affected him much; he spoke of it in the long letter which he wrote to Dr. Price, March 22nd, 1778.

"I owe you a double share of gratitude," says he, "first, for your work . . . ; 2nd, for the politeness you have shown in suppressing the imputation of *awkwardness* mixed by you with the good you said of me in your

* "My dear and illustrious philosopher, I have been commissioned to send you the enclosed copy of M. Turgot's famous decrees. You know them, and, consequently, you esteem him. You have heard of his downfall, and you will pity us; for although he did not sufficiently know either society or business, although in maintaining his views he had a stubbornness and a coldness little calculated to make them adopted, although he deemed it a great deal too easy to upset all established things, and to go against all received prejudices, so long as one is right, yet no one has regretted him." (Letter of Suard to Hume, May 28, 1776.)

additional observations. I might have deserved the imputation, if you had not had in your mind's eye any other awkwardness except that of not having known how to unravel the intrigues set at work against me by people much more clever in that line of conduct than I am, than I shall ever be, and than I wish to be. But it struck me that you ascribed to me the awkwardness of having rudely gone against the general opinion of my nation, and in that respect I think that you had done justice neither to me nor to my nation, where there is much more enlightenment than is generally thought amongst you, and where it is perhaps easier than in your own country to bring back the people to reasonable ideas."

The opinion expressed by Doctor Price was held then as a kind of axiom. Up to his death, and even afterwards, Turgot has been looked upon as having made shipwreck because he could not master himself, and because, on account of the asperities of his character, he could not win the kindness of those whose support he needed to get on.

Although this judgment has been almost unanimously subscribed by Turgot's contemporaries, it ought to be revised by the generations born of the Revolution, because the coadjutors and friends, as well as the adversaries and enemies of the great minister, have mixed up his personal and individual cause with that of his doctrines; nor have they noticed that the defects of character ascribed to him, and which have brought about his downfall, have been, fifteen years later, one of the principal reasons of the final triumph of his ideas.

It is known now, in consequence of *governments of opinion* having been practised for many years, that the upsetting of a cabinet on a question of principle leads often to this: a party is formed which adopts the programme of that cabinet, and the new party is strong enough to realise subsequently, when circumstances have become more favourable, the reforms which had been endangered by the very downfall of the minister.

Democracy, which has made the Revolution, certainly needed not to remember Turgot when it destroyed privileges, and placed its equalising level on French society; but we must acknowledge that it has been influenced in the highest degree by the remembrance of Turgot in all economic and financial questions, especially on the day when it consecrated the principle of unfettered work—principle which was contrary to the aspirations of some of its leaders, who thought that it could be neglected consistently with the passion for equality.

After leaving public life Turgot devoted himself almost entirely, first, to the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, over which he presided as vice-director in 1777, and then to the literary studies which had charmed him in his youth. He had many friends, and he was fond of seeing them, although they were "the thieves of his time," as he said, after Bacon. He eagerly procured all the scientific works which were published throughout Europe. He studied the higher branches of geometry with the Abbé Bossut, chemistry with Lavoisier, astronomy

with Rochon. Condorcet kept him *au courant* of all that was going on at the *Académie des sciences.*

When Franklin came to Paris, at the end of 1776, he saw him frequently; he talked with him about the constitution of the various American States. He even wrote on purpose for him a memoir on the taxes affecting articles of consumption. He also sent one day to Sartine, anonymously, a note on Captain Cook's third voyage of discovery, proposing that his ship should be assimilated to those of neutral powers. "Captain Cook," said he, "is probably on his way back to Europe. The purpose of his voyage being merely the progress of human knowledge, and therefore interesting all nations, it is worthy of the king's magnanimity that its success should not be allowed to stand compromised by the fortunes of war." Sartine caused this note to be approved by the king, but neither the king nor Sartine ever knew that the generous idea with which they associated themselves came from the disgraced minister.

During the first period of his retreat Turgot suffered very impatiently that the beautiful reforms he had under taken should be reconsidered. Hearing that there was a talk about suppressing his edicts on the abolition of *jurandes* and *corvées*, he wished to write to Maurepas. He even began a letter, but never finished it. Could he hope that they would listen once more to him who had been dismissed from power in order not to be continually wearied by his pleadings on behalf of reforms? The unfinished letter has been found amongst his papers; it is at Lantheuil.

"In spite of all that I had heard, sir, since my removal from the ministry, relating to the plan ascribed to you, of advising the king to reconsider the suppression of the *corvées* and *jurandes*, I never could persuade myself that you were bent on realising it. I cannot understand your having had ever the idea of doing so; but it is impossible to doubt now that you have already consulted the parliament as to the new decrees intended to cancel those which were passed in the last bed of justice. It will certainly seem strange to you that I should venture to write to you on this occasion. It is (not) from me that you expect advice, and I cannot presume that my opinion may make you alter your views; the very reflexions I have to submit to you are so simple, so palpably evident, that it seems morally impossible that they should not have suggested themselves to you; but the more natural and palpable they are, the more in agreement with the line of thought I always knew you to have, the more also I am obliged to believe that some extraordinary motive has closed your eyes to their evidence. I wish then to recall yourself to what you have a thousand times said and thought, to what you owe to the public, to the king, to your own reputation; I want to oppose your conscience to passion, which, allow me to say so, conceals from you even your own interest. Forgive me this frankness, sir; my intention is not to offend you by unpalatable truths; but you know me well enough to understand that I cannot see without the deepest sorrow a great good destroyed to which I had

had the happiness of contributing, a good supported by the will of the king against the obstacles put in its way, a good which I was bound to suppose solidly established. I feel this interest, of course; I dare also to feel concerned for the honour of the king, which may be compromised by so sudden a change—the king who ought to be dear to me, both as a citizen, and as having shared his confidence and his kindness."

There the letter ended, and it has never been finished. Turgot had the grief of seeing the suppression of his decrees. If he had lived ten years more he would have had the joy of seeing them once and for ever reinstated in the code of our laws; but his health was precarious, and his attacks of gout frequently recurred. He had only a few more months to live. Poetry occupied his last days. He had finished his translation of the 4th Æneid in metrical verses. He translated in rhymed verses some Odes of Horace. Dupont de Nemours tells us that Turgot dictated to him, during his last illness, the translation of the ode *Æquam memento.*

"Un même torrent nous entraîne;
Un même gouffre nous attend.
Nos noms jetés confusément
S'agitent dans l'urne incertaine.
Tôt ou tard le sort les amène
Et désigne à chacun son tour,
Pour passer l'onde souterraine
Dont le voyage est sans retour."

Turgot died in Paris, March 18, 1781, with the firm-

ness of soul of a man of whom Malesherbes could say that he had the heart of L'Hôpital and the mind of Bacon. He was buried at first in the church of the Incurables, Rue de Sèvres, so says M. de Neymarck; but his coffin was transferred afterwards to the cemetery of Bons, in Normandy.

A tradition preserved in the family tells us that in 1793, at the time when all the available lead was required by the government, his coffin was removed from the tomb, and opened in order to extract the metal. Several of the persons entrusted with that operation had known Turgot. They were frightened at seeing him in a perfect state of preservation, and at looking at his features, which appeared as if he was yet alive to reproach them for disturbing his repose. At that view they ran away, leaving the work unfinished. The municipal officers had the coffin hastily put into a grave, but the spot was not marked. All that we know at the present day is that Turgot's remains are buried in an unknown corner of that little country churchyard.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REACTION AFTER TURGOT'S DEATH.—FINAL TRIUMPH IN 1789.—FRESH REACTIONS UNDER THE EMPIRE, THE RESTORATION, THE REPUBLIC OF FEBRUARY AND THE REPUBLIC OF 1871, IN THE NAME, FIRST, OF THE ORGANISATION OF LABOUR, AND, SECONDLY, IN THAT OF FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION.—RADICAL SOCIALIST SCHOOL.—ECONOMIC CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

TURGOT could not have succeeded except for the authority of the king, and the concessions which a minister more tractable than he was might, for the sake of conciliation, have made to the court and the parliament, would have produced no useful effect for the ultimate success of his enterprise.

The *ancien régime*, after the slow transformations it had undergone, consisted in the eighteenth century of a despotism tempered by the privileges which certain corporations enjoyed, such as the nobility, the clergy, the magistracy, the army, the trades' guilds, etc. The destruction of these privileges, and the substitution of a general guarantee given to the whole nation instead of

the special guarantees secured by these privileges to a certain number of individuals, such was the object aimed at by Turgot. "The cause of the evil," says he to the king in his memoir on municipalities, "comes from the fact that your people have no constitution. You might govern, as God does, by general laws."

A revolution alone—that is to say, the destruction of the existing system—could bring about that progress, and such a revolution could be accomplished without violence only if the two powers, the two active powers of the system, or one of them, the king and the privileged classes, had consented to undertake it. Turgot could not depend upon the privileged classes, which were, at that time, very far from anticipating a night of August 4th, and which, believing themselves very strong, had no wish to lay down their arms. His only chance, therefore, was to persuade the king to assume the lead of the movement, and obtain from him that he would occupy that position with firmness. But if Louis XVI has sometimes felt what he could dare in that range of ideas, he has never been strong enough to pass from sentiment to action.

Could Turgot have overcome the king's hesitations if he had spared the influential persons of the court and the parliament, and if he had not successively quarrelled with everybody? To state the question thus is to show the contradiction it implies. His object was to change a system resting precisely upon those very persons whom some say he should have conciliated.

To conciliate them would have been, in some sense, doing them homage and respecting their authority, as if it had been a regular one, whereas his purpose, on the contrary, was to destroy them so far as they were organs of the government, and prevent them from exercising, as corporate bodies, any influence whatever on the administration of the realm.

People soon perceived, after Turgot's downfall, the reason which, instinctively or not, directed the resistance of the privileged classes to his reforms. The reaction did not confine itself to the cancelling of the decrees which had just been registered by the bed of justice; it aimed at the same time at a general political result, namely the strengthening of the system, and deducing from it the most extreme consequences. After having served the reaction, Necker was carried away by it, as Calonne was to be subsequently. The constitution of the State, patiently restored by the parliament and the nobility, assumed a form more and more tangible. The French monarchy degenerated into an oligarchy of privileged individuals, masters of the crown, and powerful enough to prevent the king, if even he had wished to do so, from performing his part of protecting his people against the encroachments of the aristocracy.

Nothing is more distressing and, at the same time, more extraordinary than the reaction which took place after Necker's first ministry. The spirit of privilege had never shown itself more exacting than in 1781. Commoners (*roturiers*) till that epoch might appear on the

lists of officers, and a good number of them under Louis XIV, Louis XV, and even during the first years of the reign of Louis XVI, held a conspicuous place in the staff of the French army. The order of 1781 on the army commission is more stringent than all the previous ones. Whoever for the future wished to obtain one either in the infantry or the cavalry had to prove that he possessed four degrees of nobility.

"Instead of yielding gently to the action of time," wrote Sieyès in his famous pamphlet of 1788, "the aristocracy stiffens itself against it. They will lose naught of their privileges; nay, more, they increase them. Quite recently they have, without any further ado, granted for ever to the nobility the offices of presidents and councillors." Joly de Fleury, Necker's successor, carried to its extreme limits the narrowness of the reactionary spirit. In a note appended to his translation of Marcus Aurelius he is astonished that the most useful of laws should still remain to be done. "Men should have been commanded, under the severest penalties, to keep within just limits their natural curiosity, and forbidden to speak and write on topics which are beyond their intelligence."

Those who heard Turgot, who were his friends and coadjutors, who shared his disgrace for having served him during his ministry, could read in 1784 and 1788, three and five years only after his death, a decree of the Paris parliament prohibiting the mowing of corn with a scythe (this concerns agriculture), whilst (this is for industry) the

length of the pocket-handkerchiefs manufactured in the kingdom was to be precisely equal to their breadth. Reaction in the army, in industry, in the magistracy, reaction even in the application of feudal rights of the landlords; the government was hurrying towards the precipice with the most terrible rapidity.

And yet the reaction could not provide for everything, it could not increase the privileges and fill the treasury; ruin the Third Estate in oppressing it, and yet take from it wherewith to foster the development of all abuses; throw open to favourites the pension-fund, and, at the same time, bring down the expenditure below the income. Amiable and clever as he was, Calonne could not draw the kingdom from the abyss where it was sinking. That well-informed man, agreeable, full of resources and of questionable morality, finally made up his mind to take up Necker's financial reforms and Turgot's economic ones. His plan was that, undoubtedly, of the two ministers who had tried to restore order in the disorder of the old system; for us this is a title of recommendation, and we should feel most grateful to him. "Why!" said the king, whilst listening to him, "it is some downright Necker that you bring me." Louis XVI might have added that it was also some Turgot.

Calonne's territorial subvention, which affected all landlords and all estates without exception or privilege, was nothing else but the land-tax which Turgot was meditating at the time of his disgrace; and which was to be the object of his next reform. It was also a plan of

Malesherbes, if it is true that Malesherbes is the author of the memoir preserved in the State Paper Office, where, speaking of the necessity of compelling all the privileged persons to contribute to the taxes, it is said: "This truth, so evident, has been felt by all administrators. It would have been felt by the whole nation, if the nation had been allowed to know it, and to discuss its own interests." Calonne exhibited the naked truth to the nation, and, by summoning the notables, he prepared "the appeal to the whole nation for the purpose of discussing its own interests." But if Calonne possessed the ideas of Turgot and the skill of Maurepas, if he combined at the same time the virtues which save and the vices which please, if he was a courtier without being any the less an economist, a philosopher, a statesman, why did he not succeed where Turgot had failed? And if it can be said of him that he was the faithful portrait of *the* Turgot, which this great minister is found fault with for not having been; if he had what was deficient in his predecessor according to the opinion of those who blame in Turgot his inflexible temper and his too contemptuous arrogance, why has he not deserved to receive from posterity all the praises bestowed upon Turgot *plus* those which have been denied him? The reason is easily found: it is that the Revolution could not be avoided by compromises with the privileged classes, whether these compromises came from Calonne or from Turgot. History is there to prove this. Turgot would have lost by being a Calonne, and Calonne has gained nothing by having aimed at being a Turgot.

In the night of August 4th the National Assembly voted the reformation of the *jurandes*. Turgot's apotheosis was beginning. His trusty friend, Dupont de Nemours, became the inspirer of the finance-committee, and drew up the address to the French nation on direct taxes. It is certainly Turgot's views which are the basis of the financial system of the Revolution, such as Dupont de Nemours has given the programme of it, and such as it results from the deliberations of the National Assembly; the tax should be real, consequently it should bear only upon perceptible riches, and leave no opening for any arbitrary act in the recovery of it.

Article 7 of the law of 1791 enforces Turgot's own decree on the *jurandes*, and reproduces almost all its wording. "Beginning with the 1st of April next, every citizen shall be at liberty to exercise any profession, art, or industry he pleases, after having taken out a patent, and conditionally on his complying with all the rules which may be established." Finally, article 1 of the decree of June 14-17, 1791, definitively condemns the old system of industry. "The destruction of all kinds of guilds of citizens exercising the same trade and profession being one of the fundamental laws of the French constitution, it is forbidden to re-establish them in fact, under any pretence and form whatever." One could perceive already, however, the germ of the disagreement which was soon to break out between the reformers; some, devoted to liberty, granted it to their adversaries, just as they secured it to themselves; the others inclined to

defend the rights of the State so far as to oppress individuals: the liberals and the Jacobins. "We were about to see," says Louis Blanc, "other revolutionists give a new definition of liberty, such as the revolutionists of '89 understood it. We shall hear them say: 'Liberty consists not in the right, but in the *power* granted to man of exercising and developing his faculties under the empire of justice and the safeguard of the law.'"

In his journal, *l'Ami du Peuple*, Marat stood up for the trades' guilds. "Nothing better, of course," he wrote on the 16th of March, 1791, "than to free the citizens from the bonds which stand in the way of the development of talents, and keep the wretched in a state of poverty. But I am not sure whether this full liberty, this exemption of all apprenticeship, of all novitiate, to exercise this or that trade, this or that profession, is good from the political point of view. . . . The first effect of these foolish decrees is to impoverish the State by destroying manufactures and commerce; the second is to ruin the consumer by everlasting expenditure. . . . In every State which has not glory for its principle of action, if you take the desire of a man to establish his reputation from that of making his fortune, there is an end of good faith. Every profession, every traffic must soon degenerate into cheating. As the only question then is to dispose of one's works and one's articles of commerce, it is enough to make them look attractive, and to sell them at a low price, without caring for solid and well-finished labour. . . . . And as they have then neither merit nor solidity,

they must necessarily degenerate into rubbish, and determine the consumer in easy circumstances to provide himself abroad."

Louis Blanc places himself at another standpoint; he sees in Turgot's work, taken up by the *constituents* of 1789, the triumph of individualism over fraternity:

"We must speak plainly (*History of the French Revolution*): Turgot proclaimed in splendid language the right of labour. This will be in the future one of his titles of honour. But do not make a mistake: Turgot never went so far as to acknowledge the right to labour. He consented that the poor should be free to develop their faculties, but he did not admit that society should be obliged to supply them with the means of so doing. He meant that the obstacles should be suppressed which arise from the action of the authority, but he did not compel the State to act as the guardian of the poor, the weak, the ignorant . . . . What was the use of repeating to the *prolétaire:* 'You have the right to work,' when he could answer: 'How do you wish me to avail myself of that right?' The school of so-called fraternity found fault with Turgot for having thought, first, that to destroy the obstacles, and, next, to grant liberty, was the whole duty of government, and, next, that isolation was the only guarantee against monopoly."

One circumstance, however, prevented the Revolutionists from returning to corporations, and led them to retain Turgot's work in opposition to Marat and to many others; it was this: they saw clearly that corporations

contained in themselves a principle of exclusion and of oppression, and that by corporative association they could establish a kind of family, and it was an exclusive family which did not admit amongst its members all those who needed work.

Napoleon was not to have any of those scruples; accordingly, under the Consulate there was an offensive reaction, still more strongly characterised, towards corporations. A great number of memoirs were presented to the council of state in favour of the re-establishment of trades' guilds. Regnaud de Saint-Jean d'Angély constituted himself the patron of the *jurandes*.

Under the Restoration, the champions of the revival of corporations plucked up courage. In 1817, a barrister, named Levacher-Duplessis, who pretended to act on behalf of "thirty-four commercial and industrial professions," presented to the king a request on the necessity of re-establishing merchants' guilds and the communities of arts and trades. This request stated anew the arguments of the 1776 parliament, and spoke of Turgot according to the fashion of the advocate-general Séguier, and in a style otherwise rather strange.

Turgot "was born with an inflexible and absolute character; his opinions, which had assumed the hue of that character, had degenerated into a sectarian spirit." The corporations destroyed by him had been reconstituted after his disgrace; their abuses, it was said, had disappeared, and they had rendered the greatest services to trade and to industry. It is those corporations, wisely

regulated, that Levacher and the Paris merchants wanted to see re-established. "Obstacles must be put in the way of that mercantile mania which fills the career of industry with a crowd of adventurers who dishonour it." The Paris Chamber of Commerce, to which this request was submitted, examined it, and, adhering to the opinion it had often expressed, maintained its first deliberation—"time and reflexion having, in that respect, strengthened the opinion of the chamber." In 1821 there was a fresh petition, a fresh deliberation of the Chamber of Commerce, a fresh affirmation of the unchangeable convictions of its members.

"The chamber, deliberating on this communication .... and considering, besides, that the immense progress of French industry since the time when it became free from the monopoly of masterships (*maîtrises*) is a sufficient caution against the danger of the innovation which some would introduce into the present legislation .... protests, as its predecessors have done, and with the same unanimity, against the petitions addressed to both Chambers (Houses of Parliament)."

In February, 1848, the corporations rose into favour. Those who proclaimed the right to work, and whose doctrines were summarised in the formulæ of the organisation of labour, seemed for a moment to have the power in their own hands; but they frightened the nation, and their ideas perished during the days of June.

Thus Turgot's doctrines had passed, unimpaired, through the most dangerous epochs for liberal views of

political economy: the Convention, the Empire, the Restoration, the Revolution of February. Napoleon would have made a police-agency of the corporations, reconstituted and placed under his iron hand; he had a *projet de loi* drawn up according to that idea, but was obliged to give it up. The Restoration had inspired courage into those who deplored the downfall of the old French institutions, and yet it did nothing to return to the old organisation of industry. All attempts had successively failed before the general indifference, before the suspicions engendered by the pretensions of the spirit of monopoly which satisfied one interest whilst it threatened all the others; finally, there was the dread of a popular and revolutionary tyranny.

If modern France has escaped from the reaction against the enfranchisement of work, it is owing to the memorable struggle which Turgot carried on in 1776.

The blow struck by him had been a deadly one for the corporations. The re-establishment of them after his disgrace had been incomplete, inasmuch as the old communities were not restored, and fresh associations, merely, were either sanctioned or proscribed. The *esprit de corps* had been broken in them; it failed to revive under Necker, during the Revolution, the Empire, and the Restoration.

If equality between the citizens, the admissibility to all offices, the abolition of all distinctions must be considered as the necessary consequence of the French Revolution in the conditions of its outburst; and if these

democratic conquests make up, in some sort, what has been called the modern *régime*, it is perhaps not the same case with a system of interference in labour, in industry, and in commerce, which would proceed by general laws, without attaching to exclusive corporations a protection which otherwise might have seemed to reinstate a privilege of the *ancien régime*. By extending and applying that protection to open corporations, it might perhaps have been possible to make it acceptable to those innumerable agents of the Revolution whose only passion has always been equality, and for whom liberty meant in most cases the right of refusing it to their adversaries.

We may believe that it was not by virtue of a principle, but by a sentiment exclusively their own, springing from their education, and which they could perfectly well not transmit to their successors, that the statesmen of the Revolutionary era have preserved our country from the reactions attempted against the liberty of labour established by Turgot in 1776. They were really under the personal influence of Turgot, who had died more than ten years before. Turgot it was who made them act, and who was as the invisible director of their economic conscience.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS.—DIFFICULTY OF RECONCILING THE PRINCIPLE OF FREE LABOUR WITH THAT OF THE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION.—TURGOT'S LETTER TO DOCTOR PRICE.

THERE are two schools at the present day which ask for the re-establishment of corporations through the unrestricted and unreserved application of the freedom of association; the one is the socialist radical school, the other is the Roman Catholic economic school.

These two schools call for the interference of the State in questions relating to labour, extending its attributions beyond the limits which economists consider as natural; but the socialist radical school is inclined to recommend close corporations, whereas the Roman Catholic school is in favour of open ones. Both look upon Turgot as their great enemy. He it is who must be hurled down. Some reproach him for having abolished workmen's privileges; the others find fault with him for not having respected their liberty.

The French Catholic economic school proceeds from the German Christian socialism which was born in Prussia after 1848, and pretended to have found the

solution of the social problem in the union of the Church, manifesting itself by a thousand forms of beneficence, with the State, permeating the inner life of the nation through the taxes and the organisation of numerous local boards. The German Christian socialism struggled with equal ardour against the liberal economic system of Adam Smith and J. B. Say, and against the political liberal school which from England spread throughout the whole of Europe the system of parliamentary and representative government.

Several branches have spurng up from the parent stem. Prince Bismarck pretends to connect State socialism with it. He said one day at the Reichstag: "It is not socialism we are making; it is, if you like, Christianity *sans phrases;* we wish to give to the people, not hollow phrases, but something substantial."

The Austrian Catholics caught the inspiration. In 1875, the popular meeting of Lower Austria declared in a solemn resolution that "the social question could be solved only by the legislative autonomy of the corporations in their own affairs, and under the protection of a Christian government." Prince Lichtenstein, speaking in the name of the party, asked and obtained the reconstitution of corporations, compulsory for industry of a smaller kind. The law affecting small industries was voted in 1883; but the formation of district-corporations for the establishment of more important industries has been reserved as the object of another law.

The French Catholics have entered into the same

direction as the Austrian ones, and the long residence of the Count de Chambord in Austria has contributed to their evolution. At the same time we must acknowledge that they have made considerable progress, if we compare them to the Austrian Catholics. The corporations which they want to see instituted would be free, open, exclusive of monopoly, and constituted by a very broad application of the principle of association.

According to them, Turgot's great crime does not lie in his having suppressed old associations in which had evidently crept many intolerable abuses, but in his having prevented the formation of fresh associations which might have been organised without allowing anything to the spirit of monopoly, and solely to protect those persons who belonged to them.

*Familial* industry, they say, has perished with the trades-guilds. "Great industry," which has taken its place, has obtained the mastery of the nineteenth century, dragging along with it a train of misery: pauperism, strikes, the struggle between class and class, the disorganisation of the family, and the rest. The whole evil, they add, has arisen not from the abolition of abusive and degenerate corporations, but from the oppression of a Jacobin law copied on the 14th Article of Turgot's edict: "We likewise forbid all masters, companions, workmen, and apprentices belonging to the aforenamed bodies and communities," so it was said in the fourteenth article, "to form any association or assembly amongst themselves under any pretext whatever."

When people say of *familial* industry that it has perished because free labour has isolated the workman, and because it has allowed the patrons to enlarge their factories, to absorb all the work in immense workshops, and all the trade in colossal depositories; when they speak of these extensions as if they were the cause of all the misfortunes of our times, they are guilty of a twofold exaggeration; first of all, they give a very inaccurate picture of the eighteenth century and of its *familial* industry, placing them in too favourable a light; secondly, they ascribe, to begin with, to freedom of work effects which it has not produced, and then, to the present time vices which are not peculiar to it.

The eighteenth century is represented as if it had known neither misery, nor class-struggles, nor difficulties amongst workmen, nor strikes; as if the morality of workmen's families was much superior to that of the workmen of our days; as if the workmen were always brethren, and the apprentices always like sons in their relations with the virtuous masters who employed them, and who were not yet tormented by that eagerness for gain which is supposed to be the characteristic of our modern commercial men.

The truth is that the condition of the labouring classes under the *ancien régime* was neither happier nor more virtuous than it is just now. Those who have studied the history of workmen know perfectly well that since a century the progress of their comforts has been immense, and if that of their morality has been slower, it is far

from having proved null. The workmen of the nineteenth century are in a much greater state of prosperity, and in a state of morality considerably higher, and from that point of view they have no reason to envy the workmen of days gone by.

It is free labour, some say, which has disorganised *familial* labour, and created industry on a large scale. That it is a mistake. It is true that industry has endeavoured to follow the progress of wants, and that liberty has enabled it to do so. In order to reach that end, it has been obliged to study the conditions of cheapness, and submit to these conditions. But if *familial* industry has disappeared, it is not on account of freedom of labour, but through the impossibility of producing at a cheap rate. Can anyone desire the reconstitution of *familial* industry at the cost of a factitious rise in the price of all the things most necessary to existence, coupled with the natural and progressive increase in the burdens resulting from a more *intense* way of living? If we did not shrink from such a consequence, is it to be supposed that we could succeed in obtaining? we must evidently give up the thought of doing so. Success, here, is impossible.

All the discussions on over-production, on the obligations incumbent upon manufacturers to work on a large scale in order to diminish on every article the weight of general expenses—all these discussions belong to a different order from economic problems. Their real object is the increase of our wants, the taste for

luxury, the progress of civilisation, the destinies of mankind.

Those who regret the expansion of industry on a large scale, regret that mankind should have increasing wants. They would stop it in this direction, and they condemn the means employed by industry to satisfy the increase of our wants.

But is it not idle to try and recast the human race into a new mould? Is it not Utopian to think that mankind can be denied the satisfactions they require, because these satisfactions are deemed useless or dangerous for morality? Such discussions have no practical value; they do not prevent humanity from moving on, obeying laws which cannot be abolished in a chamber of deputies. The modern schools are weak, when they call free labour to account, when they think they can find in the suppression of freedom a remedy for the labour problem of our day. They run at every moment the risk of falling into the Utopias of the organisation of work, and they will find it difficult to reconcile to them the public mind under a system of discussion and of political liberty. But what is the liberty in question here? Must we not take precautions against the possible crushing of individuals by associations which would be free to do what they pleased? Turgot did not consider as an enlightened friend of liberty the man who gave the name of liberty to the right of forcing everything upon others, if only the majority gave its consent. This is what he wrote to Doctor Price in the letter he addressed to him on the 22nd of March in 1778:

"How is it that you are nearly the first among your men of letters who has given correct notions of liberty, and who has proved the falseness of the idea stated over and over again by all republican writers, namely, that 'liberty consists in being subject to the laws alone,' as if a man oppressed by an unjust law was free? This would not be true, even on the supposition that all the laws are the work of the assembled nation; for, after all, the individual has also *his* rights, which cannot be taken from him except by violence, and by unlawful use of the general strength. Although you have taken account of this truth, and explained yourself on the subject, yet it might be worth while your developing it at greater length, considering the small amount of attention bestowed upon it even by the most zealous champions of liberty."

It seems that we could not end what had to be said on Turgot more worthily than by repeating these noble and courageous words.

# NOTES.

## INTRODUCTION.

(P. 11, l. 5.) *Jurandes, maîtrises.* The *jurande* was an office given by election to a member of a guild or corporation, whose business it was to act as chairman at the meetings, defend the interests of the guild, receive the apprentices, etc.—*Maîtrises:* when a workman had served his time as apprentice, and produced a specimen of his talent or skill (*chef d'œuvre*), he was admitted to the *maîtrise*, which implied great authority and extensive privileges.

(Page 11, l. 18.) *Talons rouges*, name given to the courtiers in France, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, on account of the shoes with red heels, which the noblemen alone had a right to wear at Versailles. "La scène de Paris, qui est plus remplie de petits-maîtres Français *à talons rouges* que de héros antiques."—*Voltaire.*

(P. 11, l. 19.) *Bonnets carrés.* Lawyers used to be thus designated in France, in consequence of the square caps they wore.

## CHAPTER I.

(P. 17, l. 8.) *Grand conseil*, established under the reign of Philip the Fair, discharged political, administrative, and judicial functions; was reorganised in 1497.

(P. 17, l. 16.) *Plans cavaliers.* Plans giving the view of the houses bordering the streets, and of the monuments which the streets contain.

(P. 19, l. 9.) *Président à mortier.* These magistrates presided over the chief court (*grand chambre*) of the parliaments, and were thus called from the caps they wore.

## CHAPTER V.

(P. 97, l. 13.) *Corvées.* The *corvées* (*service de corps*) were due by the serf or retainer, first to the king, secondly to his feudal lord. The making and keeping of the roads and highways, the conveyance and carriage of goods, etc., constituted the chief *corvées.* As they had to be discharged without any remuneration, they entailed serious loss of time upon the persons ordered for the purpose.

(P. 116, l. 24.) *Minage, hallage, aunage. Minage* was a duty recoverable by the lord of the manor on the corn which

was measured out in his estates ; the *mine* equalled half a *setier*, or 78 *litres*, 73.—*Hallage*, duty levied on the goods exhibited for sale in the fairs and markets (*halles*).—*Aunage*, duty payable for the right of affixing a stamp or trade-mark on goods and other articles of merchandise.

(P. 119, l. 17.) *Compagnie de Noailles.* The king's body-guard consisted of four companies, each of which did duty for a quarter ; they were known by the names of their respective commanding officers.

(P. 119, l. 22.) *Mousquetaires.* In the French household troops there were two companies of mounted musketeers, called respectively *black* and *grey*, from the colour of their horses. The *black* musketeers were first created in 1660 ; the *grey*, in 1622.

(P. 120, l. 2.) *Colonel-général*, regiment of cavalry commanded by the colonel-general ; bore that name since the reign of Louis XIII.

(P. 123, l. 12.) *Prévôts de la maréchausée.* The *maréchausée* was a body of mounted soldiers doing in the provinces the duty now devolving upon the *gendarmerie départementale.* The *prévôts* were their officers, and formed what was called the *commission prévôtale.*

## CHAPTER VI.

(P. 136, l. 3.) *Bed of justice.* The name *lit de justice* was given to certain extraordinary meetings of the Paris parliament, held for the discussion of important cases, and presided over by the king in person. All the great officers of the State were bound to attend, as also the chief members of the court. The king's throne was covered with a canopy, hence the designation *lit de justice*, and the whole form of the sitting was most strictly adhered to, in accordance with a minute programme settled beforehand.

(P. 136, l. 14.) The *Poissy "caisse."* This was a kind of bank established at Poissy, near Paris, for the purpose of settling the obligations, compensations, sales, purchases, and other money matters between the Paris butchers and the cattle-breeders of Normandy.

(P. 138, l. 35.) *Pays d'élection*, name given to certain provinces in France, where a tribunal existed whose business it was to assist the officers of the crown in the fixing and collecting of the taxes. The *pays d'états*, enjoying the privilege of having provincial assemblies, voted their own taxes, and settled the assessment of the amount required.

# INDEX.


ALIGRE (Etienne François d'), 1726-1791; Senior President of the Parliament of Paris; his speech at the Bed of Justice, 156, 157.

ANGOULÊME CRISIS, the, 74, 75.

BEAUVEAU (Charles Juste de), 1720-1793; Marshal of France; member of the *Académie Française*, 117

BERTIER DE SAUVIGNY (Louis Bénigne François), ? 1742-1789; Intendant of Paris, 119.

BERTIN (Henri Léonard Jean Baptiste), 1719-1792; *Contrôleur général des Finances;* a friend of Turgot, 106, 107.

BIRON (Louis Antoine de Gontaut, Count, then Duke de), 1700-1788; a Marshal of France, 118.

BLANC (Jean Joseph Louis), 1814-1877; celebrated political economist; and Turgot's theories, 56, 57; and Necker, 110, 195.

BROCHET DE SAINT-PREST, *Maître des requêtes*, dismissed; 100, 105.

CALONNE (Charles Alexandre de), 1734-1802; *Contrôleur général* (1783; his character as a financier, 191, 192.

CHOISEUL PARTY, the, 125, 130, 165, 166.

CONDORCET (A. J. M. Caritat, Marquis de), 1743-1794; letters of his to Turgot, 128

DUPONT DE NEMOURS (Pierre Samuel), political economist, 1737-1819; 10, 19, 22, 34, 36, 44, 61-63.

FAMILIAL INDUSTRY, 202, 203.

GALIANI (the Abbé Ferdinand), 1728-1787, an Italian writer and publicist.

GÉNÉRALITÉS and INTENDANCES, what they were; 66, 67.

GOURNAY (Vincent de), 1712-1759; one of Turgot's masters, 44, 45, 59; his biography, and his system, 61-65.

GRAFFIGNY (Françoise d'Issembourg d'Apponcourt, de), 1694-1758; 34, 35.

GUINES (Adrien Louis de Bonnières, Count, then Duke de), 1735-1806; ambassador in England, 135; recalled, and made a duke, 164, 165.

HUME (David), 1711-1776; his letters to Turgot, 53-55; to Morellet, 58, 59.

*La guerre des farines*, 11, 116.

LAND-TAX, the, 73, 74.

LA ROCHEFOUCAULD D'ENVILLE (Duchesse de), a great admirer of Turgot 92, 93.

LEPRÉVOST DE BEAUMONT (J. T. G.), a barrister, denounces the *Pacte de famine*, 102-104.

LENOIR (Jean Charles Pierre), 1732-1806; lieutenant-general of police; dismissed by Turgot, 122.

LOUIS XVI, King of France, 1754-1793; names Turgot *Contrôleur général*, 92; letters of, to Turgot, 118, 120; holds a Bed of Justice, 123.

MARAT (Jean Paul), 1744-1793; celebrated revolutionist; his views on freedom of labour, 196.

MARMONTEL (Jean François), 1723-1799; writes an *éloge* of Gournay, 63.

MAUREPAS (Jean Frédéric Philippeaux, Comte de), 1701-1781; Prime Minister, 92.

*Métayer* SYSTEM, the, 89.

MINETTE (Mademoiselle de Ligniville, then Madame Helvétius), 9, 35.

MIROMÉNIL (Armand-Thomas, Hue de), 1723-1796; Keeper of the Seals, 97; and Turgot, 139-146; his speech at the Bed of Justice, 156.

MOLINARI (Gustave de), 1819; political economist; on Necker, 110.

MONTCHRÉTIEN (Antoine de), killed, 1621; a Protestant leader, 15, 16.

MORELLET (André, Abbé), 1727-1819; one of Turgot's chief friends, 36, 37.

MUY (Louis Nicolas Victor de Félix, Count de), 1711-1715; Marshal of France, Minister of War, 118.
NECKER (Jacques), 1732-1804; celebrated as a financier; his correspondence with Turgot, 108, 109; his book, 110; praised by Louis Blanc, 110, 189.
PARLIAMENTS, recall of the, 127-130.
PHYSIOCRATES, the; their doctrines, 50, 51.
POTHIER (Robert Joseph), 1699-1772; his opposition to loans on interest, 78, 79.
PRICE (Richard), 1723-1791; a celebrated dissenting minister; his correspondence with Turgot, 180, 181.
QUESNAY (François), 1694-1774; and Turgot, 44-46; his system, 51.
SARTINE (Gabriel de), 1729-1801; Minister of the Navy, 171, 172.
SMITH (Adam), 1723-1790; and Turgot, 31-33.
SOCIALISM, Christian, 201.
TERRASSON (Jean, Abbé), 1670-1750; a soldier and a novelist, 21.
TERRAY (Marie Joseph), 1715-1778; *Contrôleur général*; his schemes and abuse of power, 90; his intrigues, 99-101.
TRUDAINE DE MONTIGNY (Charles Philibert), 1733-1777; and Turgot, 145-147.
TURGOT des Tourailles (Jean), 15.
TURGOT de Saint-Clair (Antoine), 15.
TURGOT (Michel Antoine), *Prévôt des marchands*, 17-19.
TURGOT (Anne-Robert-Jacques), *b.* 1727 (May 10); studies at Saint-Sulpice, 19, 20; his thesis, 20; first work on political economy, 21; his *Sorboniques*, 24, 25; poetry, 26, 27; leaves the Sorbonne, 29; and Adam Smith, 31; deputy solicitor-general, 33; *Maître des requêtes*, 33; and Minette, 35; and Madame du Deffand, 37; and the *Encyclopédistes*, 39; and Voltaire, 40, 41; writes for the *Encyclopédie*, 41, 42; Quesnay and Gournay, 44-46; his two chief works, 45-47; *Intendant* at Limoges, 67; his views on taxation, 72; memoir on loans and usury, 76-82; on the free circulation of corn, 83-88; named *Contrôleur général*, 93; interview with the king, 94-96; his programme, 95; edict on the sale of corn, 111-113; and the coronation oath, 132-133; and the six decrees, 136-143; opposition to, 147-155; his secret letters to Louis XVI, 168-178; dismissal of, 179; occupied during his retreat, 182; death of, 185; reaction against, 192-199.
TURGOT (Louis), ancestor of the family, *Maître des requêtes* and Councillor, 15.
VERY (Abbé de), a great friend of Turgot, 92, 93, 171, 172, 175, 176-179.
VOLTAIRE (François Marie Arouet de), 1694-1778; and Turgot, 40, 41, 146.
WORKING-CLASSES, state of the, under the *ancien régime*, 206.

# CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX.

| | SYNCHRONISMS. |
|---|---|
| 1712 . . . . . | Birth of Gournay. |
| 1715 . . . . . | Terray *b.* |
| 1727 (May 10) Birth of Turgot (Anne Robert Jacques) . . . . . | Sir Isaac Newton *d.*; George I, King of England, *d.*; Boulainvilliers publishes his work, "de l'Ancien governement de la France." |
| 1723 . . . . . | The Duc d'Orléans, regent, *d.* |
| 1736 . . . . . | Terray, Councillor at the Parliament. |
| 1748 . . . . . | Gournay retires from business. Montesquieu publishes his "Esprit des Lois." |
| 1749 (Jan.) Enters the Sorbonne. First work on finances (refutation of Law's system) | Rousseau publishes his "Discours contre les sciences et les arts." |
| ,, (Dec.) Prior of Sorbonne. . . . . | Buffon's "Histoire naturelle" begun. Voltaire's "Rome sauvée." |
| 1750 Leaves the Sorbonne and the Church . | Marshal Saxe *d.* |
| 1751 . . . . . | Gournay "Intendant du commerce." First volume of the "Encyclopédie." D'Aguesseau *d.* |
| 1752 (Jan.) Deputy Solicitor-General. | |
| 1753 "Maître des Requêtes" . . . . . | The Parliament exiled. |
| 1754 "Lettres sur la tolérance civile." | |
| 1755-1759 Studies administration under Gournay. | |
| 1761 (August 8th) "Intendant" at Limoges . | "Family compact." The Duc de Choiseul, Minister of War and of Foreign Affairs. |
| 1762-70 "Avis sur l'assiette et la répartition de la taille." | |
| 1764 . . . . . | Exportation of cereals to foreign countries permitted. |
| 1766 "Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses." Turgot's six decrees registered. | |
| 1769 "Mémoire sur les prêts à interêt et sur l'usure" . . . . . | Terray "Contrôleur général. |
| 1770 "Lettres sur la liberté du commerce des grains." | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1774 | (July) Minister of the Navy . . . | Quesnay *d.* Louis XV *d.* |
| ,, | (August) "Contrôleur général." | |
| 1775 | "Guerre des farines" . . . . | Beaumarchais' "Le Barbier de Séville" performed. |
| 1776 | Member of the "Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres" . . . | Necker appointed Director-General of the Finances. |
| ,, | (May) Retires from public life. Succeeded by Clugny. | |
| 1781 | (March) Death of Turgot . . . | Necker publishes his "Compte Rendu." Maurepas *d.* |